Sunday, February 15, 2026 No 46 ₹8

DH on Sunday

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DECCAN HERALD
The Power of Good

Will Navjot Singh Sidhu have the last political laugh?

Considered mercurial, will he join the BJP for an electoral return?

P7

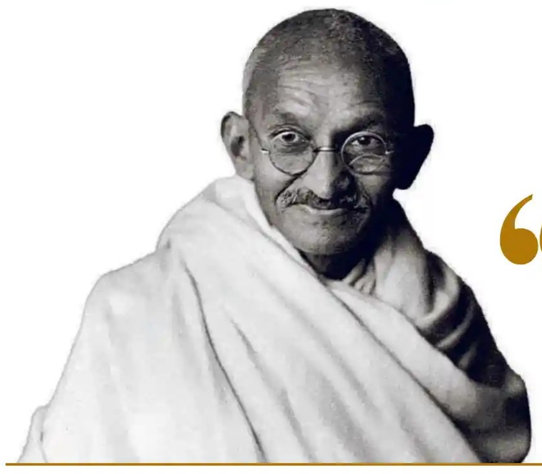
US military preparing for operations in Iran

Trump says it has been difficult to make a deal with Tehran

GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA

1000 Thousand Days

From Hope to Happiness



"The future depends on what you do today."

Mahatma Gandhiji

Under the noble ideals of **'Antyodaya'** and **'Sarvodaya'** championed by **Mahatma Gandhiji**, the Government of Karnataka, led by Hon'ble Chief Minister **Shri Siddaramaiah** and Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister **Shri D K Shivakumar**, marks a significant milestone of 1,000 days in office.

Key Milestones

₹1.16+ Lakh Crore
Allocated so far for the Five Guarantees

2.11+ Lakh
Families Provided with Title Deeds

₹1.5 Lakh Crore
Invested in Bengaluru's Infrastructure Development

₹1.12+ Lakh Crore
Reserved Annually for Public Welfare Schemes

1.37+ Crore
Families are Direct Beneficiaries of Government Schemes

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As is enshrined in our constitution, "to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture" is the fundamental duty of every citizen of the country.

karnataka information

BATTLE OF NARRATIVES Resource-rich province remains mired in poverty & insurgency

Long-running grievances drive violent unrest in Balochistan

LT GEN BHOPINDER SINGH (RETD)

The Pakistani province of Balochistan is a tinderbox of contradictions. The largest of the four provinces, with 44% of the landmass, it is also the least populated, with only 6% of the national population. It is the "richest" province in natural resources, contributing an estimated 80% of Pakistan's minerals, gas and energy resources, yet also the poorest in terms of socio-economic development, with over 70% living below the poverty line.

Despite major foreign and commercial investments linked to the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor — including Gwadar Port and Free Zone, the Reko Diq copper–gold project, and the Duddar lead–zinc mine — GDP per capita has consistently worsened. Twenty years ago, it was about 75% of the national average; today it has regressed to close to 40%. Cold statistics point to the steady diminishment, denial and discrimination shaping the Baloch fate within the Pakistani narrative.

There is a historical context to the disconnect between Baloch identity and the state of Pakistan. The Baloch were never part of the mainstream Pakistani independence movement. Balochistan's integration into Pakistan was politically opposed and violently contested from the outset. The largest Baloch state, Kalat, declared its independence on 15 August 1947 and acceded, controversially and unwillingly, as late as March 1948. Ironically, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah — who had earlier served as legal counsel to Kalat — initially supported Kalat's autonomy, only to retract later. This unsettled disillusionment has given rise to at least five distinct rounds of armed insurgency: 1948, 1958–59, 1962–63, 1973–77, and 2004 to the present.

Yet despite moments of extreme national vulnerability following crippling defeats in the Indo–Pak wars of 1965 and 1971, and even the 1999 conflict, there was no linked support to Baloch insurgents or coordinated uprising in Balochistan to suggest any credible Indian role in the insurgency. Not only history but geography also ensured minimal contact between mainland India and the distant province of Balochistan, which runs contiguous to Iran. By road, the nearest point is at least 700–800 km from the Line of Control. Unlike the overlapping cultural ties, linguistic links and imagined histories affecting Punjabis, Sindhis or even Pashtuns, the tribal Baloch have had no significant positive or negative affiliation with India. The Baloch insurgency is largely organic, historically grounded — predating the onset of Indo–Pak tensions — and rooted in ongoing discrimination and the resulting disaffection.

Today, the violent Baloch insurgency has escalated significantly. Pakistan's approach to addressing Baloch issues has been overwhelmingly militaristic, with little focus on societal co-option, development, or meaningful grievance redressal. Reactive measures have included enforced disappearances, bloody operations such as Radd al-Fitna, and increasingly propagandistic narratives aimed at discrediting the movement. As insurgencies cannot survive without local support, the endurance of one of the world's longest-running insurgencies underscores the spiralling frustrations of the Baloch people.

Soldiers gather at the site, following millitant attacks, in Quetta, Pakistan. REUTERS FILE

Recent insurgent attacks have demonstrated unprecedented coordination and sophistication, unlikely without local support in the form of safe havens, intelligence, logistics, recruitment, and, above all, the moral legitimacy of a popular struggle. The symbolic pervasiveness of wounded yet determined Baloch sentiment was demonstrated in the deadliest recent attack, Operation Herof ("Black Storm"), by the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), which involved two female suicide bombers.

Yet Pakistan prefers to externalise — read, blame India — for the causality of the Baloch insurgency instead of acknowledging the historical and ongoing marginalisation at its core. While blaming India helps justify a militaristic and heavy-handed approach, Baloch anger continues to deepen. Operation Herof was followed by an immediate retaliatory strike by the Pakistani military, reportedly killing over 145 alleged militants, typifying the inefficacious narrative of endless bloodshed. As political, economic and social grievances remain unaddressed by Islamabad, the excessive use of force perpetuates the cycle of violence through fresh recruitment. Beyond the rote, distractive, and unsubstantiated blame game of the so-called "India hand", local Baloch grievances and alienation continue to accumulate dangerously.

No foreign government — not even China or any Middle Eastern sheikhdom — multilateral forums such as the United Nations, or any credible international news agency has given credence to the "India hand" theory in Balochistan. The Pakistani government's rhetorical branding of the insurgency as Fitna-al-Hindustan (India-instigated sedition) further insults the lived experiences of Baloch indignities. Baloch nationalist Mir Yar Baloch stated, "We are not receiving any kind of support from New Delhi," and added, "The Baloch are not terrorists. They are a nation that has endured 78 long years of state terrorism, economic plunder and brutal occupation by the extremist and artificial state of Pakistan."Accepting this reality would not only expose Pakistan's mishandling of an internal issue but also undermine the "two-nation theory", which fractured in 1971 with the creation of Bangladesh and now shows strain in Balochistan and neighbouring Pashtun areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. India is a mere side-game in these implosive underpinnings.

(Lt Gen Bhopinder Singh is a former lieutenant governor of Puducherry and Andaman & Nicobar Islands)

WORLD AT A GLANCE

Actor Callum Turner and singer Dua Lipa attend the premiere of 'Rosebush Pruning' at the Berlinale International Film Festival in Germany on Saturday. REUTERS

Europe must take responsibility for its own security, says EU chief

▸ Europe must assume more responsibility for its own security, European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen told a security conference in Munich on Saturday, AFP reports from Munich.

"Europe needs to step up and has to take on its responsibility" for its security, she told the Munich Security Conference. "Europe's security was not always been seen as our primary responsibility," she said. "We must grow a European backbone of strategic enablers: in space, intelligence and deep strike capabilities," she said. "No taboo can go unchallenged," she said, referring notably to the use of a collective commitment by EU member states to defend one another in the event of aggression. "I believe the time has come to bring Europe's mutual defence clause to life". Europe has already embarked on a historic rearmament effort to have a credible defence by 2030, following threats by the US to reduce their investment in NATO, and to prepare for a potential conflict with Russia.

US military strikes drug boat

▸ The US military said that it has carried out another deadly strike on a vessel accused of trafficking drugs in the Caribbean Sea, AP/PTI reports from Washington.

US Southern Command said on social media that the boat "was transiting along known narco-trafficking routes in the Caribbean and was engaged in narco-trafficking operations". It said the strike killed three people. A video linked to the post shows a boat moving through the water before exploding in flames. Friday's attack raises the death toll from the Trump administration's strikes on alleged drug boats to 133 people in at least 38 attacks carried out since early September in the Caribbean Sea and eastern Pacific Ocean. US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth declared last week that "some top cartel drug-traffickers" in the region "have decided to cease all narcotics operations INDEFINITELY due to recent (highly effective) kinetic strikes in the Caribbean".

A relative of a political prisoner lies on the ground during a protest outside the Bolivarian National Police Zona 7 prison in Caracas, Venezuela, on Saturday. AFP

'Grandfather of Internet' dies at 91

▸ David J Farber, a gregarious professor of computer networks who was sometimes called the "grandfather of the Internet" because of the ultimately groundbreaking students he trained, died on February 7 in Tokyo at the age of 91, NYT News Service reports.

When Farber started his career in the mid-1950s, at Bell Laboratories, computers were practically islands unto themselves. If they communicated at all, they talked by means of a teletype or punch card reader down the hall. Since then, thanks in part to his work, the realms of communication and computation merged into that one powerful glue for society that is the Internet. Eventually entering academia, he earned his nickname by guiding students who came to be called the fathers of the Internet Protocol, or IP.

Navalny killed with dart frog toxin

▸ Five European states, including Britain, France and Germany, said Saturday that Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny was killed by a "rare toxin" from a dart frog and that the Russian state was the prime suspect in the death, AFP reports from Munich.

Navalny, a staunch critic of Russian President Vladimir Putin, died in an Arctic prison on February 16, 2024, while serving a 19-year prison sentence. "The UK, Sweden, France, Germany and The Netherlands are confident Navalny was poisoned," the countries said.

US military preparing for weeks-long Iran operations

Trump says it has been difficult to make a deal with Tehran

WASHINGTON, REUTERS

The US military is preparing for the possibility of sustained, weeks-long operations against Iran if President Donald Trump orders an attack, two US officials told Reuters, in what could become a far more serious conflict than previously seen between the countries.

The disclosure by the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity due to the sensitive nature of the planning, raises the stakes for the diplomacy underway between the United States and Iran.

US envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner will hold talks with Iran on Tuesday in Geneva, with representatives from Oman. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio cautioned on Saturday that while Trump's preference was to reach a deal with Tehran, "that is very hard to do".

Meanwhile, Trump has amassed military forces in the region, raising fears of new military action. US officials said on Friday the Pentagon was sending an additional aircraft carrier to the Middle East, adding thousands more troops along with fighter aircraft, guided-missile destroyers and other firepower capable of waging attacks and defending against them.

Trump, speaking to US troops on Friday at a base in North Carolina, openly floated the possibility of regime change in Iran, saying it "seems like that would be the best thing that could happen". He declined to share who he wanted to take over Iran, but said "there are people". "For 47 years, they have been talking and talking and talking," Trump said.

Trump has long voiced scepticism about sending ground troops into Iran, saying last year "the last thing you want to do is ground forces", and the kinds of US firepower arrayed in the Middle East so far suggest options for strikes primarily by air and naval forces.

Trump signals support for regime change

President Donald Trump has said that a change in power in Iran "would be the best thing that could happen" as the US administration weighs whether to take military action against Tehran, AP/PTI reports from Washington.

Trump made the comments shortly after visiting troops at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and after confirming earlier in the day that he is deploying a second aircraft carrier group to the Middle East for potential military action against Iran. "It seems like that would be the best thing that could happen," Trump said in an exchange with reporters when asked about pressing for the ouster of the Islamic clerical rule in Iran.

Hasina's extradition depends on legal process: BNP

DHAKA, PTI: BNP chairperson and soon-to-be prime minister of Bangladesh on Saturday said extradition of deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina "depends on the legal process."

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) leader's comments at a press conference here came a day after one of his senior colleagues reiterated the party's firm stance on seeking Hasina's extradition from India to face trial.

Rahman's BNP on Friday secured a sweeping victory with more than two-thirds majority in the landmark parliamentary elections held on Thursday. A massive student-led protest ousted Hasina's Awami League regime on August 5, 2024. Since then she has been living in exile in New Delhi as an Interim government led by Muhammad Yunus took charge three days later.

After a trial in absential, Hasina, 78, was found guilty of crimes against humanity by the country's International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) in November 2025 and sentenced to death. Her aide and former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal was also given a death sentence on similar charges.

India stresses strategic autonomy amid US claims on Russian oil

NEW DELHI, DHNS

India's energy companies will factor in costs, availability and risks while making import choices, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said in Munich on Saturday, even as his US counterpart Marco Rubio once again claimed that President Donald Trump's administration had secured New Delhi's commitment to stop buying oil from Russia.

"Oil companies in India, as in Europe and probably in other parts of the world, look at availability, costs and risks, and take the decisions that they feel are in their best interest," Jaishankar said at an event held on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference on Saturday.

He was asked whether the recently announced trade deal between New Delhi and Washington would force India to slash its energy imports from Russia. "So many things are changing, and so many of us are doing our calculations and recalculations," said the external affairs minister.

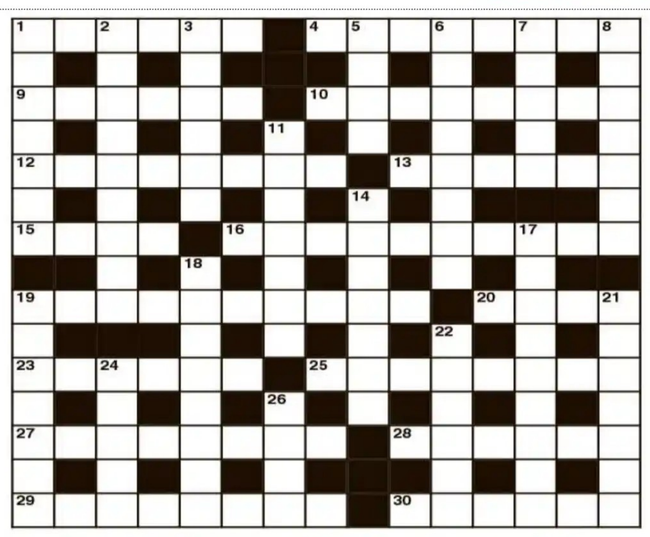
Rubio, however, said on the same day that New Delhi had assured Washington of its commitment to stop buying oil from Russia. The US Secretary of State was also speaking at the Munich Security Conference.

Jaishankar and Rubio had a brief interaction on the sidelines of the conclave. "We are very much wedded to strategic autonomy because it is very much a part of our history and our evolution," said the external affairs minister, adding: "It is something which is very deep, and it is something which cuts across the political spectrum as well." He was replying to a query on India's strategic autonomy.

"We would not necessarily agree on everything, but I do believe that by doing that, and if there is an inclination to find common ground and overlaps, that would happen," Jaishankar said.

Trump last week issued an executive order in Washington withdrawing the 25% punitive tariff he had imposed in August 2025 on India's exports to the US to persuade Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government in New Delhi to stop importing crude oil from Russia. He, however, warned that the tariff might be reimposed if India restarted importing oil from Russia in the future.

◆ SUNDAY CROSSWORD CHALLENGE 2667 ◆



ACROSS

1 Bearlike Australian marsupial (6)
4 Exposed to attack (4-4)
9 Exclusively (6)
10 Authorise (8)
12 Sought after (2,6)
13 Warning (6)
15 Principal (4)
16 Pursuing la dolce vita (6,2,2)
19 Exact lookalike (4,6)
20 Ring of light (4)
23 Shameless (6)
25 So-called (8)
27 Shipwrecked person (8)
28 For preference (6)
29 Hasten (8)
30 With a light touch (6)

DOWN

1 Sharp in retort (7)
2 Extravagantly emotional play (9)
3 Assurance (6)
5 First Russian tsar (4)
6 Swap (8)
7 Company of lions (5)
8 Incessant (7)
11 Very old (7)
14 Run short (4,3)
17 End of story (5,4)
18 Carte blanche (4,4)
19 Fiasco (7)
21 Methodically arranged (7)
22 Comprehension (6)
24 Greek fabulist (5)
26 Deny oneself food (4)

SOLUTIONS TO CROSSWORD 4027

CRYPTIC

ACROSS: 9, Hair shirt 10, Leave off 12, Roll 13, Saying 14, Gall-eon 15, On the line 17, A-mend-ment 18, To-r-M-ent 20, Motion 21, Bore 24, So-me-what 26, Suffered 28, Tots 29, Closer 31, Ne-st-eg-g (rev) 34, Automatic 36, Re-mission 38, Dresser 39, Res-I's-t 40, Fair 41, Come-down 42, Making out.

DOWN: 1, Sh-are-out 2, Fi-llet (rev) 3, Bigamist 4, Strike 5, Flagrant 6, Laughed off 7, Seclu-de 8, E-F-fete 11, Knitted 16, Eleven (11) 19, Ro-OS-t 20, Mat 22, OBE-se(conds) 23, Teases 25, Holy terror 26, Si-R 27, Strands 30, Securing 31, Namesake 32, G-ener-ate 33, Smashed 35, Ti-E-d on 36, Resume 37, In a row.

EASY

ACROSS: 9, Avuncular 10, Agitator 12, Iris 13, Avenue 14, Debacle 15, High jinks 17, Thingummy 18, Dynasty 20, Pacify 21, Amen 24, Skylight 26, Helpless 28, Odds 29, Lately 31, Comical 34, Televised 36, Hunky-dory 38, Cutback 39, Rubies 40, Kerb 41, Devoured 42, Trousseau.

DOWN: 1, Famished 2, Outing 3, Slovenly 4, Uranus 5, Majestic 6, Disdainful 7, Garbage 8, Dotcom 11, Relying 16, Jostle 19, Naked 20, Put 22, Music 23, Clammy 25, Grass skirt 26, Hay 27, Portico 30, Eldorado 31, Convenor 32, Layabout 33, Aviator 35, Lather 36, Habits 37, Opener.

SU DO KU X - 3828

		8					5	4
				4	2			
2		7						
4	9			2	7	5		
	1			8		3		
					6			
5						4	7	
					3			8

SOLUTION TO 3827

8	4	2	6	5	1	9	7	3
6	5	9	2	7	3	8	4	1
1	7	3	9	8	4	2	6	5
7	9	5	4	1	8	6	3	2
2	8	4	3	6	7	5	1	9
3	6	1	5	9	2	7	8	4
5	3	7	8	4	9	1	2	6
4	1	6	7	2	5	3	9	8
9	2	8	1	3	6	4	5	7

To solve the puzzle:
The objective is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column, each 3x3 box and each shaded diagonal line contains the same number only once.

DH on Sunday
DECCAN HERALD
The Power of Good

Foreign policy to be guided by interests of B'desh: Rahman

Suryakumar, Salman dodge question on handshake

SIDNEY KIRAN
COLOMBO, DHNS

Arch-rivals India and Pakistan will face off at the R Premadasa Stadium in Colombo for the T20 World Cup game on Sunday. This is the first time they will be clashing since the Asia Cup in Dubai last September, when Indian skipper Suryakumar Yadav refused to shake hands with his Pakistani counterpart Salman Ali Agha.

It was no surprise that Suryakumar was asked about the handshake on the eve of Sunday's contest.

"You wait for 24 hours," Suryakumar replied to a pointed question. "Usme kyon dhalna hai (Why do you want to get into it)? We have come to play cricket, play good cricket. We will take those calls later. You wait, nah, eat and sleep well!" added Suryakumar.

Salman, too, remained non-committal when asked if he would shake hands with Suryakumar.

▸ Handshake, Page 6

ICC MEN'S T20 WORLD CUP

TODAY'S MATCHES

West Indies vs Nepal	@11am
USA vs Namibia	@3pm
India vs Pakistan	@7pm

Amid tech push, big drop in traffic cases tracked by cameras

Rise in cases filed by cops on the ground; police say field checking unavoidable

DH EXCLUSIVE

SNEHA RAMESH
BENGALURU, DHNS

A traffic police personnel checks for violations on a road in Bengaluru. DH FILE PHOTO

TRAFFIC VIOLATIONS IN BENGALURU

Year	Contact cases	Contactless cases	Total
2023	2,51,664	87,47,715	89,99,379
2024	4,81,905	78,07,399	82,89,304
2025	**8,49,532**	**61,38,868**	**69,88,400**

Despite the claims of the Bengaluru Traffic Police (BTP) that they have been implementing tech-driven initiatives to find violations, the number of cases tracked by cameras has come down significantly, from 87.47 lakh in 2023 to 78.07 lakh in 2024 and further down to 61.38 lakh in 2025.

On the other hand, cases recorded through means of contact (i.e. through personnel on the ground) have increased, with the numbers nearly doubling from 4.81 lakh in 2024 to 8.49 lakh in 2025.

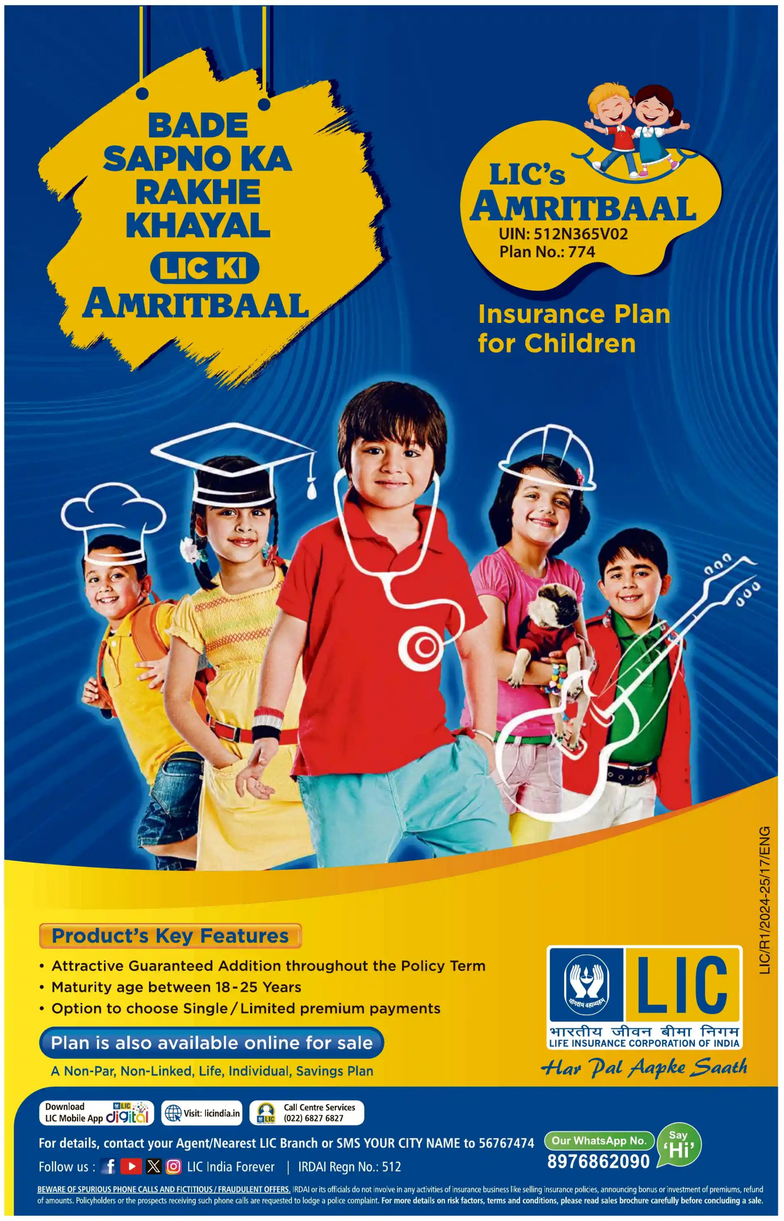
While only 2.7% of the total cases were registered through contact in 2023, the rate increased to 5.8% in 2024 and further to 12.14% in 2025, indicating that the number of cases registered by personnel on the ground is on a rise.

Officials attributed the drop in cases tracked by cameras to the BTP's move to manually validate all the cases recorded automatically after complaints that a few cases were wrongly detected.

"Sometimes, there are errors when cases are recorded automatically using cameras and hence, we are now validating all of them. In this process, a few cases might be removed and hence, the numbers might be down," Karthik Reddy, Joint Commissioner of Traffic, Bengaluru City, told *DH*.

Moreover, sources said some cameras were not functional, bringing down cases.

▸ Traffic police, Page 6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LIC KI AMRITBAAL
LIC's AMRITBAAL
UIN: 512N365V02
Plan No.: 774
Insurance Plan for Children
Product's Key Features
• Attractive Guaranteed Addition throughout the Policy Term
• Maturity age between 18-25 Years
• Option to choose Single/Limited premium payments
Plan is also available online for sale
A Non-Par, Non-Linked, Life, Individual, Savings Plan
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7 yrs after Pulwama, a changed Kashmir

Suicide attack on forces set the stage for revocation of Article 370

ZULFIKAR MAJID
SRINAGAR, DHNS

Seven years ago, on February 14, a suicide bomber struck a CRPF convoy in south Kashmir's Pulwama district, killing 40 paramilitary personnel and wounding many more.

The attack, carried out by the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) terrorist group, shocked the nation and marked a defining moment in the history of Jammu and Kashmir—one that would reshape its politics, governance, and security architecture forever.

The fidayeen (suicide) strike on the Srinagar-Jammu national highway was the deadliest assault on Indian security forces in recent decades.

Pulwama was not just a tragedy; it became a catalyst for change. Within months, New Delhi initiated sweeping measures in Jammu and Kashmir. The most consequential was the revocation of Article 370 in August 2019, ending the state's special constitutional status and reorganising it into two Union Territories—Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh.

NARENDRA MODI
Prime Minister

"Remembering the brave heroes who laid down their lives in Pulwama on this day in 2019. Their devotion, resolve and service to the nation remain forever etched in our collective consciousness. Every Indian draws strength from their enduring courage.

RAHUL GANDHI
Congress leader

"My heartfelt tributes to our brave soldiers who were martyred in the audacious terrorist attack in Pulwama in 2019. "The nation will forever remain indebted to them for their supreme sacrifice in the defence of Mother India.

Security in the Valley was tightened, major political leaders were placed under detention, and the political landscape underwent a radical realignment.

Analysts say the attack accelerated decisions that had long been debated in Delhi.

"Pulwama exposed vulnerabilities and hardened the government's approach to terrorism and governance in the Valley," said a former bureaucrat familiar with Kashmir policy. "It set the stage for structural changes in administration and politics that continue to define Jammu and Kashmir today."

The anniversary this year saw heightened security along highways and at memorial sites in Pulwama. Families of the fallen, security officials and political leaders paid homage to those who sacrificed their lives for the nation.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid tribute to the fallen jawans, calling them "heroes whose devotion and service to the nation remain etched in our collective consciousness."

Seven years on, the Pulwama attack remains a stark reminder of the human cost of militancy and the enduring resilience of India's security forces. More than a day of mourning, it is remembered as a turning point—a moment that reshaped the trajectory of Jammu and Kashmir, altered its political map, and reinforced the nation's resolve against terrorism.

Tipu Sultan portrait in Malegaon rocks Maharashtra politics

CM Fadnavis, state Cong chief wade into war of words

MRITYUNJAY BOSE
MUMBAI, DHNS

What started as a controversy over the putting up of a portrait of Tipu Sultan in the office of the deputy mayor of the Muslim-majority power-loom town of Malegaon has emerged as a full-scale political tussle between the ruling BJP and the Congress in Maharashtra.

Now, even Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and state Congress president Harshavardhan Sapkal are hitting out at each other.

In the recent Malegaon Municipal Corporation elections, Sheikh Nasreen Khalid of the Islam Party was elected the mayor, while Shan-e-Hind Nihal Ahmed of the Samajwadi Party emerged as the deputy mayor.

On Friday, Ahmed put up a portrait of Tipu Sultan in her office. However, it was later removed, fearing a major backlash.

The BJP and the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena slammed her for the act. Shiv Sena leader Nilesh Aher flagged the issue to the Malegaon civic administration.

"The portrait was gifted to me by my corporators. I don't have any objection to it," said Ahmed.

POLITICAL ROW

- Harshwardhan Sapkal equates Mysuru ruler Tipu Sultan with Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj
- CM Fadnavis condemns; BJP demands apology
- FIR sought for promoting enmity and provocation
- Sapkal claims Tipu fought British in spirit of Swarajya; attacks BJP narrative
- BJP accused of stirring communal tensions to divert from governance issues

Political tussle

To a question on the issue, Sapkal said Chhatrapati Shivaji was known for his bravery and vision of Swarajya, and claimed Tipu Sultan later followed a similar path by fighting against the British.

"Tipu Sultan became a warrior who showed bravery; that is, he became a son of the soil; he never embraced any poisonous, destructive ideas. As a sign of bravery, Tipu Sultan should be seen as equal to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj," Sapkal told reporters.

Fadnavis was quick to react. "We condemn what Sapkal said... This is the politics of appeasement," he said.

"The Congress president should be ashamed. Chhatrapati Shivaji established Swarajya and freed the common man from the yoke of the Mughals. While Tipu Sultan killed thousands of Hindus... We will not tolerate this comparison at all," said the CM.

However, Sapkal later tried to do some damage control with a post on X, while also attacking Fadnavis.

"The people of Maharashtra have not forgotten what Bhagat Singh Koshyari, along with the BJP and the RSS, spewed and the insults they hurled regarding Chhatrapati Shivaji," he wrote.

Meanwhile, Acharya Tushar Bhosale, the chief of the BJP's spiritual coordination front, asked: "Is Sapkal the president of the Maharashtra Congress or the Pakistan Congress. If this Shiv-drohi Sapkal is not immediately removed from his position, it will prove that tge Congress is insulting our kings for the sake of Muslim votes."

Govt cheating cotton farmers and textile exporters: Rahul

NEW DELHI, DHNS: Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Saturday alleged that the Modi government is cheating India's cotton farmers and textile exporters through the India-US trade deal by "spreading confusion".

In a post on 'X', he said he had in Parliament raised the issue of 18% tariff on Indian garments when Bangladesh has got a no tariff benefit from the US and the reply from a minister was that India will have to import cotton from America if we also want the same benefit. "18% Tariff vs 0% -- Let me explain how the expert liar Prime Minister and his cabinet are spreading confusion on this issue. And how they are cheating India's cotton farmers and textile exporters through the India–US trade deal. Bangladesh is being given 0% tariff benefit on garment exports to the US – the only condition is that they import American cotton," he said.

He said Bangladesh is now giving signals that it may reduce or even stop importing cotton from India.

In Mumbai, Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal claimed that Rahul is "immature" and lacks understanding of the economy. Rahul is "thousand miles away from the truth" and asserted "discredited leaders" like him may try but would not be able to stop Prime Minister Modi and his service to the nation, he said. "Rahul doesn't have any understanding of economy, only tweeting false & misleading information," he added.

Access to justice can't remain an abstract ideal reserved for legally empowered: CJI

NEW DELHI, PTI: Chief Justice of India Surya Kant on Saturday said access to justice cannot remain an abstract ideal reserved for the legally empowered and must translate into real outcomes for marginalised citizens.

Speaking at the 11th biennial meeting of the Commonwealth Judicial Educators, the CJI said judicial leadership cannot be confined to administrative authority or institutional hierarchy and must be understood as an intellectual and ethical orientation. "Access to justice cannot remain an abstract ideal reserved for the legally empowered. It must translate into real outcomes for the last person standing in the line, the marginalised citizen whose faith in the justice system rests upon its accessibility, responsiveness and humanity," the CJI said.

CJI Surya Kant

While placing stress on integration of technology into the justice system, he said that AI must assist, and not replace, judicial reasoning.

CJI Kant said judicial leadership demands not only administrative foresight but deep empathy, and the courts must be vigilant to ensure that procedural complexity does not transform into a barrier for those in need of protection.

The CJI said the convergence of arbitration, mediation and specialised courts reflects an overarching transformation: from a litigation-centric paradigm to a justice-centric ecosystem.

"This transformation acknowledges that justice must be accessible not only in principle but in practice -- timely, efficient and responsive to the needs of litigants," he said.

CJI Kant said courts must continuously earn public trust through clarity of reasoning, transparency, and consistency. "Judges must appreciate not only the doctrinal aspects of constitutional law but the philosophical foundations that give those doctrines meaning. Comparative constitutional dialogue, historical study, and ethical reflection are essential components of this educational process," he said.

He said courts must act as guardians of constitutional identity even as they adapt to changing realities.

FINAL GIFT

Infant's organs save four kids in Kerala

ARJUN RAGHUNATH
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, DHNS

A ten-month-old Aalin Sherin Abraham's organs are giving a fresh lease of life to four children in Kerala, her parents are being widely appreciated for the emotional decision, especially at a time when many children with organ failure struggle to find suitable donors.

Kerala Governor Rajendra Arlekar, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and actor Mohanlal were among those who hailed the decision of Aalin's parents Arun Abraham and Sherin Ann John.

State honour

The state government has also decided to accord police honours at her funeral on Sunday.

Kerala State Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation executive director Dr Noble Gracious told *DH* that many children suffering from organ failures face acute difficulty in getting-compatible organs. He said the parents' decision therefore deserves special appreciation.

"There are practical challenges in transplanting adult organs into children, mainly due to size mismatch. It is also difficult to get organs from brain-dead children, as parents are often reluctant to donate organs owing to emotional reasons. Hence, the decision of Aalin's parents deserve much appreciation," said Dr Gracious.

Aalin's kidneys, liver, cornea and heart valve were donated. The kidneys and liver were successfully transplanted into a 10-year-old and a six-month-old infant in Thiruvananthapuram, respectively.

Aalin was declared brain-dead at a private hospital in Kochi, where she was undergoing treatment following a road accident. Her organs were transported by road to Thiruvananthapuram on Friday night, with police regulating traffic to ensure unhindered movement of the ambulance over nearly 220-km journey.

Bengaluru Sunday, February 15, 2026 Pages 24 Vol 79 No 46 ₹8

DH on Sunday

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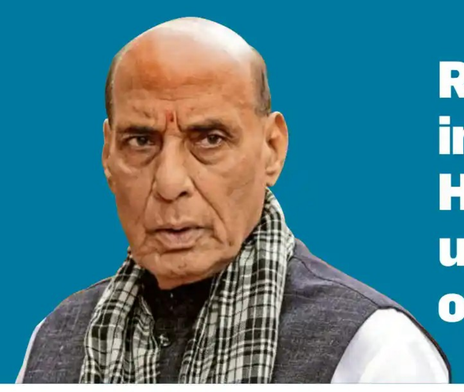


Rajnath to inaugurate H125 helicopter unit in Vemgal on Feb 17

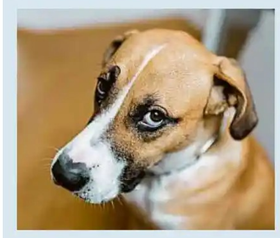
P5

Travel *Page16*

Capital charms

Visit Canberra not only for its cultural institutions but also for its nature reserves and stunning landscapes

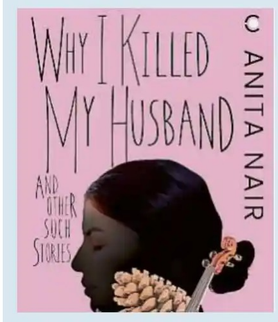
Art & Pursuits *Page18*



Learning empathy

Dogs don't speak, but they communicate constantly, and it is up to us to understand the signs instead of misjudging them

Books *Page14*



Missing ambiguity

Anita Nair's new collection of stories on the 'state of the nation' is well-intentioned but falls short of being compelling

Food & Drink *Page15*

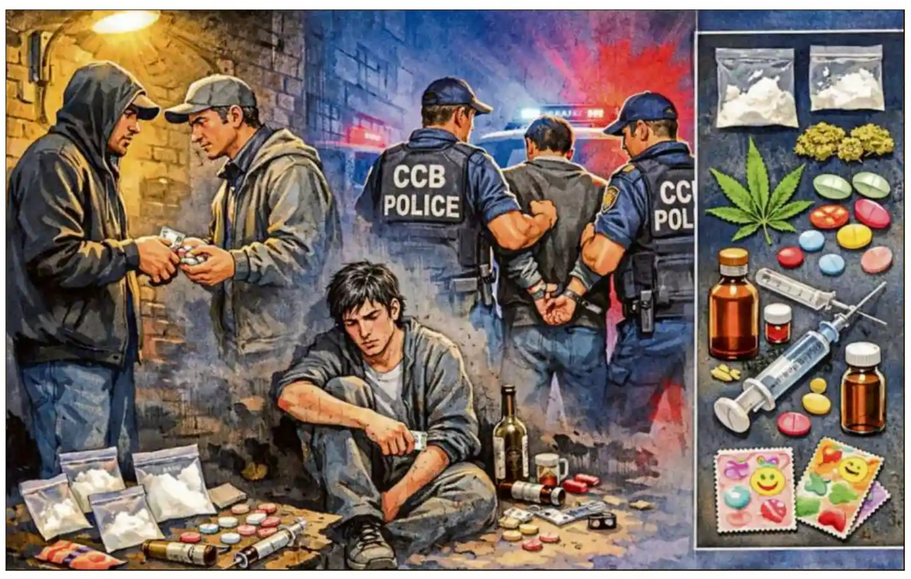
Eastward ho!

From the classic pork vindaloo to foogias, Mumbai's East Indian fare is influenced by Portuguese cuisine

Decentralised, digital: Karnataka's drug menace

Tech-savvy peddlers, synthetic narcotics and social pressure are fuelling the state's drug trade, making enforcement increasingly complex

MANJUNATH SHETTAR
BENGALURU, DHNS



AI-GENERATED IMAGE FOR REPRESENTATION

In September 2025, officers of the Central Crime Branch (CCB) apprehended a 33-year-old dental college student near Adugodi, Bengaluru. The student defied the stereotypical image of a hardened trafficker — he was educated and, by most accounts, ambitious. According to investigators, he had purchased hydro ganja and resold it at steep mark-ups, with the stated motive of funding a "luxurious life".

Just days later, the CCB seized 1.22 kg of hydro ganja worth Rs 1 crore, delivered in a foreign package at the Foreign Post Office in KG Nagar, Bengaluru. The next day, two Nigerian nationals were arrested with 3.9 kg of MDMA crystals and 82 ecstasy pills valued at Rs 7.8 crore. They reportedly told police that they sourced the drugs cheaply and sold them at higher rates to a ready clientele. Both had entered India in 2019 on valid visas.

INSIGHT

In another case that alarmed law enforcement, a chemical engineer from Belagavi — who had once aspired to launch a start-up — allegedly used his technical expertise and was in the process of setting up small-scale drug-processing units in Bengaluru. Investigators said he was in contact with financiers from Rajasthan and had discussed plans to manufacture synthetic narcotics for "easy money," banking on "a large urban customer base" and "seamless transport networks" linking neighbouring states. Machinery was reportedly installed at a farmhouse in a mango grove, with chemicals stored at multiple locations. He was caught by the Maharashtra Anti-Narcotics Task Force in December 2025.

Between the college student chasing luxury and the engineer pursuing scale lies the anatomy of Karnataka's expanding drug menace: aspirational in appeal, decentralised in structure and digitally enabled.

This new landscape has contributed to alarmingly high drug abuse in pockets of Bengaluru, Mysuru, Belagavi and Mangaluru, prompting police to confront a new generation of tech-savvy peddlers.

Mass testing could yield nearly 90% positive cases in some pockets, a senior IPS officer said.

Peddlers have found new ways to avoid detection – they carry out transactions using bike taxis and food delivery services. These methods make surveillance and tracking difficult for the law enforcement agencies.

Narcotics consumption is particularly high in paying guest accommodations and school and college hostels, the officer said. "These are vulnerable zones due to easy access," he explained.

Narcotics users sometimes turn into peddlers. They buy drugs in bulk and resell them to recover their money and make quick profits.

Many consumers are unaware of the source of the drugs or how they reach them, and investigations show that operations are more clandestine and decentralised than before.

Recently, Home Minister G Parameshwara acknowledged the gravity of the issue in the Legislative Council, stating that the government had waged a war against the menace. "We are not claiming that it can be eliminated in a couple of months, but our efforts are honest and sustained," he said.

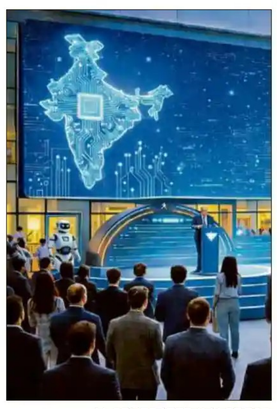
The numbers underline the urgency to tackle the issue.

▸ Substance abuse, Page 2

India's AI policy in the global norms debate

As New Delhi hosts the AI Impact Summit, India positions itself as a bridge between innovation leadership and inclusive rule-making

SANHITA CHAURIHA



AI-GENERATED IMAGE FOR REPRESENTATION

The **SUNDAY STORY**

In just a few years, artificial intelligence (AI) has shifted from the margins of technological experimentation to the centre of national strategy. For India, AI is no longer merely an emerging sector; it has become a lever for economic transformation, improved public service delivery, geopolitical positioning and social inclusion. As New Delhi prepares to host the India AI Impact Summit 2026 from February 16-20, the country's evolving AI framework reflects a distinctive ambition: to accelerate innovation at scale while embedding safeguards that sustain public trust.

India's domestic AI strategy is anchored in the IndiaAI Mission, approved by the Union Cabinet in 2024 with a substantial multi-year funding allocation. Unlike narrowly focused research grants or pilot projects, the Mission is conceived as a comprehensive ecosystem builder. Its scope covers high-performance computing infrastructure, access to datasets, model development, startup financing, skilling programmes and applied research.

The underlying philosophy is that access drives innovation. AI development globally has become concentrated among organisations with access to large datasets and advanced computational resources. India's policy response is to democratise these inputs. By lowering entry barriers, the government aims to enable startups, researchers, public institutions and enterprises across sectors to participate meaningfully in AI development.

A central pillar of this effort is the IndiaAI Dataset Platform, an open repository of high-quality, non-personal datasets. By aggregating data across domains such as language, healthcare, agriculture, climate and governance, the platform aims to stimulate locally relevant innovation. For a country as linguistically and socio-economically diverse as India, context-sensitive AI systems are not optional; they are foundational. The dataset initiative recognises that AI models trained on Western-centric corpora are unlikely to adequately serve India's needs.

Equally important is the human capital dimension. Through AI FutureSkills programmes, India is embedding AI literacy and advanced training across universities, technical institutions and emerging technology hubs, including those in Tier-II and Tier-III cities.

▸ AI policy, Page 2

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Quickly

Landowner slips out after getting Rs 99 cr

Registration of an enormously valuable property in the city took a dramatic turn when the landowner allegedly walked out of the sub-registrar's office after collecting Rs 99 crore and without signing the deed. After the buyers lodged a complaint, the owner completed the process.
Details on Page 5

Oppn mulls CEC removal ahead of polls

Looking to step up pressure on the ruling BJP and clear the internal strains ahead of Assembly polls in April-May, the Opposition is exploring the possibility of submitting a notice seeking the removal of Gyanesh Kumar as Chief Election Commissioner over the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls.
Details on Page 7

India's first underwater tunnel gets nod

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), chaired by PM Modi, has approved India's first underwater road-cum-rail tunnel project in Assam at a cost of Rs 18,662 crore. The project involves constructing an access-controlled corridor beneath the Brahmaputra River.
Details on Page 7

Substance abuse: The silent epidemic

- Karnataka has emerged as a major hotspot for synthetic drugs and cocaine in recent years
- Bengaluru and Mangaluru have recorded the highest number of cases filed under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act
- Local peddlers dominate the trade, while foreign nationals arriving in Bengaluru through students and medical visas are also involved in peddling, often targeting students and the IT workforce
- The state government is addressing substance abuse by targeting the supply chain while treating consumers as victims in need of rehabilitation rather than as offenders

63% rise in NDPS cases in Karnataka in a year

2023		2024		2025	
6,767 in Karnataka	3,495 in Bengaluru	4,188 in Karnataka	520 in Bengaluru	6,824 in Karnataka	1,383 in Bengaluru

17,779 Total in Karnataka

5,398 Total in Bengaluru

Measures to tackle the crisis

Substance abuse, from Page 1

Between 2023 and 2025, 17,779 cases under The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act (NDPS) were registered across the state. Of these, 6,824 were booked in 2025 — up from 4,188 in 2024.

Enforcement has intensified, with arrests in NDPS cases peaking in 2025. That year alone, 4,757 Indian peddlers were booked and 4,416 arrested. Over three years, 11,704 Indian peddlers were accused and 10,858 arrested, reflecting a 92% arrest rate. Additionally, 247 foreign nationals were accused of peddling and 230 arrested.

Yet, the number of convictions tells a contrasting story. Of the 17,779 cases registered between 2023 and 2025, only 6,914 ended in conviction. Convictions dropped sharply — from 3,696 in 2023 to 1,886 in 2024 and just 1,332 in 2025.

A staggering 1,590 cases involve unidentified accused, suggesting persistent challenges in tracking supply chains.

Officials attribute delays to procedural lapses, forensic bottlenecks and frequent adjournments. Legal experts warn that unless investigation standards improve, the deterrent effect of enforcement will remain limited.

When users are produced before courts and let off after paying a Rs 5,000 fine, as one officer said, the impact is minimal.

At the same time, between 2023 and 2025, 56 cases were categorised as false, placing the quality of investigation under scrutiny.

The epicentre

Another statement by G Parameshwara in the Legislative Council in 2024 and observations by senior police officials indicate that Dakshina Kannada (particularly Mangaluru), Kodagu, Chikkamagaluru, Udupi, Shivamogga, Mysuru and Belagavi districts are emerging as hotbeds of drug-related offences.

Yet, the epicentre remains undeniably Bengaluru — fuelled by rising disposable incomes, a large migrant population, its status as an educational hub and global connectivity. An IPS officer, speaking on condition of anonymity, said narcotics consumption is reportedly high even in Bengaluru's paying guest accommodations and school and college hostels, describing them as "vulnerable zones due to easy access".

While national data suggests ganja consumption is more prevalent in parts of north and central India, ganja and MDMA remain the most commonly peddled substances in Karnataka.

The state, particularly Bengaluru, is also witnessing a growing influx of high-value, chemically manufactured synthetic narcotics, indicating a troubling shift in both demand patterns and trafficking methods.

Over the last three years, while ganja made up 22,985 kg of the 24,196 kg seized, synthetic drugs (1,211 kg) contributed Rs 415 crore of the total Rs 604 crore value.

The recovery of synthetic drugs such as mephedrone and MDMA in Gujarat and Maharashtra — and their alleged links to production units in Karnataka — has raised concerns that the state could be emerging as a hub for clandestine lab operations. Recent crackdowns in Bengaluru's Kothanur and Bagalur police station limits by Maharashtra Police and the Narcotics Control Bureau have highlighted the scale of the threat.

The message is clear: traffickers are shifting to smaller, more profitable consignments. Synthetic narcotics such as MDMA, LSD, ecstasy pills and cocaine are easier to transport in small volumes, harder to detect and more lucrative.

Tech-savvy network

Another worrying trend emerging from investigations is the user-turned-peddler phenomenon. Many consumers, especially those without steady incomes, begin buying in bulk to cover their own expenses, then sell to peers to recover their costs and make quick profits.

This blurs the line between addiction and enterprise, creating a decentralised retail network that is difficult to dismantle.

Unlike hierarchical cartels, these micro-peddlers operate within social clusters — in hostels, among friends, via Instagram handles or encrypted chats. They often know only the contact who delivers the drugs, and not their source.

Transactions are increasingly camouflaged using bike taxis and food delivery services, with drop locations shared via WhatsApp. Mule bank accounts are used to launder funds.

"Drug transactions are increasingly being coordinated through social media accounts, with payments routed via UPI and other online modes, making conventional enforcement ineffective," said a senior officer in Bengaluru.

At a broader level, officers say drugs enter Karnataka from Delhi, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. Opium and heroin reportedly arrive via Rajasthan, sometimes tracing back to Pakistan, while ganja is sourced largely from Andhra Pradesh and Odisha. These inter-state links, and the involvement of foreign nationals, add layers of complexity to investigation and enforcement.

Foreign nationals, particularly in Bengaluru, have been arrested in multiple peddling cases. Police say the Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO) is informed upon a first-time arrest and deportation proceedings are initiated. Repeat offenders face detention under the PIT-NDPS Act for up to a year, the same provisions that apply to Indian nationals.

Policy shift

Director General and Inspector General of Police Dr M A Saleem said that earlier, police largely refrained from booking cases against drug users, instead adopting an approach focused on de-addiction and rehabilitation. "However, in 2025, we took a much tougher stand to curb the drug menace across Karnataka. This is why more cases were registered against users. We have also intensified vigilance and action against drug peddlers," he told *DH*.

He said Mysuru and Belagavi reported higher numbers of drug-related cases due to intensified area domination exercises and crackdowns. "Going forward, our focus is on making Karnataka a completely drug-free state in 2026," Saleem added.

According to Bengaluru City Police Commissioner Seemant Kumar Singh, the strategy to curb drug abuse is multi-layered. "Beyond awareness, we have institutionalised monitoring through monthly meetings tracking schools, colleges and foreign nationals. We are particularly vigilant about those who enter on visas but fail to report to institutions, as they are often diverted into peddling," he said.

Every college has been directed to form an Anti-Narcotics Committee comprising the principal and student representatives, working in coordination with jurisdictional police. The police have also launched a dedicated website for awareness videos and digital pledges, supported by the 1908 and 112 helplines for reporting and rehabilitation.

The state police have launched 'Sanmitra' to monitor addicts while providing sustained support and rehabilitation through structured follow-up. Under the initiative, efforts are being made to transition those in need to rehabilitation centres.

Through the 'Mane Manege Police' project, officers are visiting homes to monitor local issues, and keeping strict vigil on condiment shops and hangout spots around campuses during peak hours to deter narcotics trade. The Anti-Narcotics Task Force has intensified door-to-door sensitisation drives and campus campaigns, including outreach through Instagram.

Police are also monitoring the coast to prevent drug smuggling through ports, with squads conducting surprise checks. "Awareness campaigns alone are not sufficient," a senior officer said, calling for stricter surveillance, community participation and coordinated action.

QR code-based system

In Mangaluru, the police have come up with a QR code–based anonymous reporting system, which allows the public and students to discreetly report drug-related incidents. Within a week's time in December 2025, the city police arrested 25 drug peddlers through the system.

Mangaluru Police Commissionerate has also introduced uniform guidelines and practices across all colleges within the Commissionerate limits. Accordingly, college authorities have been conducting random drug tests among students.

"Random testing was carried out in around 100 educational institutions within the Commissionerate limits recently, during which 20 students tested positive for drug consumption. Around 5,500 to 6,000 students were tested in the first phase during the testing. Students who tested positive have undergone counselling and will be tested again in the second quarter of the year," informed Commissioner of Police Sudheer Kumar Reddy.

If 2025 was the year of crackdowns of drug-related offences, it was also the year of outreach.

Between 2023 and 2025, 68,738 awareness programmes were conducted. In 2025 alone, 32,888 programmes were held. Over 49 lakh students and 13 lakh citizens participated in these initiatives.

Digital campaigns expanded too, with social media awareness programmes rising to 8,418 in 2025.

Until arrests translate into convictions, and rehabilitation into reintegration, Karnataka's war on drugs risks remaining a cycle of seizures and headlines.

(With inputs from Ashwin B M and Sneha R in Bengaluru and Naina J A in Mangaluru)

RECENT MAJOR HAULS

MYSURU
A narcotics manufacturing unit at a factory in Mysuru was raided in January and another unit operating from a garage was busted in July 2025. During the two raids, authorities **seized 11 kg of MDMA** along with raw materials

MANGALURU
In December 2025, four peddlers targeting students were arrested in Mangaluru and **517.76 gm** of MDMA was seized. At least 20 students tested positive in random checks across 100 educational institutions from July to Dec, 2025. Around 25 peddlers were arrested in a week based on inputs from QR code-based anonymous reporting system

BALLARI
In February, police detained a high-profile trafficker **D Daula or Mahboob Daula** for alleged involvement in interstate drug operations that have plagued Karnataka and neighbouring states for nearly 20 years

BENGALURU
24 people selling drugs were arrested and hydro ganja, ganja, MDMA worth **Rs 2.08 crore** were seized in February. Another **10 people** were **arrested** and hydro ganja, sourced from Thailand and smuggled by air was seized in January

Rise in seizures of high-value synthetic drugs

Year	Drug seized (In kg)		Value of drug seized	
	Ganja	Synthetic	Ganja	Synthetic
2023	10,630	145	₹57.7 cr	₹76.3 cr
2024	6,136	195	₹47.2 cr	₹215.3 cr
2025	6,219	871	₹84.0 cr	₹124.2 cr
Total	**22,985**	**1,211**	**₹188.9 cr**	**₹415.7 cr**

Commonly abused drugs

Opium based drugs
Opium, heroin, morphine, poppy straw, codeine etc

Synthetic drugs
ATS, MDMA, methaqualone, mescaline, LSD, Mephedrone, ketamine etc

Cocaine

Cannabis - based drugs
Ganja, hashish, hashish oil etc

Accused arrested

6,254 Indians
83 Foreigners in 2023
3,237 Indians
74 Foreigners in 2024
2,874 Indians
114 Foreigners in 2025

Number of cases registered (2023-25)

45 Manufacturers | **7,773** Peddlers | **16,114** Users

Growing threat of synthetic drugs

Synthetic drugs are manufactured using chemicals and hence may result in some unexpected effects, increasing the risk for users. Non synthetic drugs are usually derived from natural sources (plants or animals). Some of the most known synthetic drugs are fentanyl and MDMA. The most seized drugs like ganja and morphine are non synthetic drugs.

> "In 2025, we took a much tougher stand to curb the drug menace across the state. This is why more cases were registered against users. We have also intensified vigilance and action against drug peddlers
> **Dr M A SALEEM,** Director General & Inspector General of Police

What drives substance abuse?

- Easy access to substance through digital networking
- Pressure from friends
- Curiosity and experimentation
- Academic pressure among students
- Work stress in mid-aged people
- Stress in relationships
- Rising disposable incomes
- Health issues, depression and anxiety
- Loneliness, loss of loved ones, social isolation

Convictions dip, pending cases mount

Challenges in cracking NDPS cases

- Peddlers avoid direct contact
- Drugs are collected from pre-designated hidden spots, with transactions conducted digitally
- Increased use of courier and postal services for smuggling
- Drugs are distributed through digital platforms
- High profile seizures are not being properly monitored

NEW APPROACH BY POLICE

SANMITRA
The Karnataka Police launched Sanmitra in November 2025 under which each police station will have a helpdesk. A designated officer and staff will mentor addicts, monitor routines, coordinate medical care and guide them through rehabilitation activities

DRUG FREE KARNATAKA APP
Through this app, available in both Kannada and English, the public can share confidential information with the police, including the location of any suspected transportation, cultivation, storage, consumption of drugs and clandestine lab setups

ANTI-NARCOTICS TASK FORCE
Announced in August 2025, the task force is a specialised force to crack down on drug trafficking and improve coordination between districts, central and intelligence units in order to dismantle organised drug networks.

AWARENESS PROGRAMMES
The state government has conducted 68,738 awareness programmes and 17,144 social media programmes in last three years involving 50 lakh students and 13 lakh citizens

Sources: Police Department data, IJHSSM paper, media reports

Compiled by Divyashri Mudakavi and Manjunath Shettar

DH Infographic RAMU MASTAIAH

Peer pressure, expectations are major triggers

Karnataka's stated goal is to become a "completely drug-free state" in 2026. But achieving this ambition requires more than raids, externment and deportation orders. The drug menace is no longer merely a law-and-order issue; it is sustained by deeper social pressures that push individuals into shadow networks.

According to psychologist Mala Sridhar, peer pressure is a significant trigger, but not the only one.

"Young people are burdened by expectations — marks, grades, careers. Failure induces a sense of worthlessness. Some believe narcotics offer temporary relief from that pressure," she said.

She added that parents often impose rigid aspirations without recognising individual strengths. While not all children succumb, some become vulnerable.

On de-addiction centres, Mala said success stories do exist. She recounted the case of a young woman who underwent treatment, completed her education and rebuilt her life. Citing psychiatrist R D Laing, she noted: "You can counsel people and help them recover. But if you send them back into the same environment they came from, what will happen?"

When you heal individuals, the environment must also change. Otherwise, there is a real possibility of relapse, she warned.

Have your say

To express your opinion, e-mail us at: insight@deccanherald.co.in

AI policy, from Page 1

A governance model that balances innovation and safeguards

Ambition, however, must be matched with guardrails. Policymakers are aware that AI systems carry risks, including algorithmic bias, opaque decision-making, privacy concerns, misinformation and security vulnerabilities. Rather than adopting a single omnibus AI statute, India has so far opted for a light-touch, risk-based regulatory model.

Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) guidelines issued in late 2025 articulate core principles of transparency, accountability, fairness and safety, while encouraging innovation through voluntary compliance and adaptive oversight. Oversight currently operates through a combination of sectoral regulations, data protection law, IT rules and domain-specific supervisory authorities.

Critics argue that the absence of a comprehensive standalone AI law leaves gaps, particularly in areas such as mandatory impact assessments, certification regimes for high-risk systems and regulatory sandboxes for controlled experimentation. Issues unique to AI, including autonomous decision-making and generative content governance, do not fit neatly within legacy statutes.

Yet India's approach appears deliberate. Rather than stifling innovation with premature codification, policymakers are experimenting with a layered governance model: strengthening institutional capacity, issuing sectoral advisories and refining guiding principles before enacting hard law. Recent policy thinking reflects this calibrated philosophy.

The Reserve Bank of India's FREE-AI Committee Report in the Financial Sector, for instance, articulated seven guiding 'Sutras' for responsible AI use in finance: Trust, People First, Innovation over Restraint, Fairness and Equity, Accountability, Understandability and Safety. Accompanied by 26 recommendations spanning infrastructure, governance and protection pillars, the report underscores a central premise: technological adoption must remain human-centric and risk-aware.

Complementing this approach, the MeitY released the India AI Governance Guidelines under the IndiaAI Mission in November 2025. These guidelines apply similar principles across sectors, reinforcing the proposition that innovation and responsibility are not mutually exclusive objectives. Together, these frameworks illustrate India's preference for embedding ethical guardrails within existing sectoral governance rather than constructing a single, rigid AI super-regulator.

The federal layer

AI governance in India is not confined to the Union government. State-level initiatives, from Centres of Excellence in Bengaluru and Hyderabad to responsible AI frameworks issued by regional administrations, demonstrate growing alignment between local innovation ecosystems and national priorities.

This layered structure reflects India's broader federal governance model, in which experimentation often begins locally before scaling nationally.

Public sector institutions have also issued internal directives governing the use of generative AI tools, particularly in contexts involving data confidentiality and sovereign information. These administrative safeguards reflect a growing recognition that AI governance must operate both through formal law and through institutional practice.

Responsible AI

The India AI Impact Summit 2026 positions the country not merely as a participant but as a norm-shaper in global AI governance. Expected to be the largest of the four global AI summits held to date, the event reflects the accelerating international effort to define principles for responsible AI.

The global AI summit process has evolved in phases: from an initial emphasis on existential and safety risks at Bletchley Park, to discussions on ethics and inclusion in Seoul, and then to operationalising shared commitments in Paris. New Delhi's edition aims to advance the conversation further — towards impact, equity and developmental relevance.

India's message is clear: Global AI governance cannot become an instrument of technological gatekeeping. The temptation for major powers to design rules that entrench their own dominance must be resisted. Governance frameworks must reflect the interests of the Global South, where AI's potential lies as much in agricultural optimisation, public health diagnostics and language inclusion as in frontier model competition.

This positioning becomes sharper against the backdrop of competing geopolitical models. In Washington, Donald Trump's administration prioritised expanding American AI capabilities while minimising regulatory constraints to preserve innovation leadership. In Beijing, Xi Jinping's government focused on shaping international governance architecture, even proposing new institutional mechanisms for AI cooperation. India's stance navigates between these poles, recognising the importance of technological competitiveness while emphasising multilateralism and inclusive rule-making.

The road ahead

The true test of India's AI policy will not be in declarations or summits, but in implementation. Governance frameworks must be nimble enough to adapt to rapid advances in generative AI, autonomous systems and sector-specific applications. At the same time, they must be robust enough to maintain public trust, particularly in a democracy where technological legitimacy ultimately depends on citizen confidence.

India's AI journey reflects a broader philosophy rooted in its digital public infrastructure story: scale with safeguards. From Aadhaar to UPI, the country has shown that technological ambition can coexist with regulatory iteration. AI now represents the next frontier of that experiment.

As the world gathers in New Delhi over this week, India will project not only its capabilities, but also its governing vision. If successfully executed, this could offer a model for emerging economies seeking to harness AI's transformative potential without compromising sovereignty, inclusion or public trust.

(Sanhita Chauriha is a technology lawyer)

ಹಂಪಿ ಉತ್ಸವ
Sri. Siddaramaiah
Hon'ble Chief Minister
Govt. of Karnataka
Sri. D.K. Shivakumar
Hon'ble Dy. Chief Minister
Govt. of Karnataka
Inauguration
Shri H.K. Patil
Hon'ble Minister of Law, Justice, Human Rights, Parliamentary Affairs, Legislation and Tourism and Minister-in-charge of Gadag District
Department of Kannada and Culture, Bangalore.
Department of Tourism, Bangalore and District Administration, Vijayanagar
Hampi Utsav - 2026
Closing Ceremony - Sunday, 15th February
Main Stage: Sri M.P. Prakash Stage, Gayithri Peeth, Hampi
Parallel Stages: Opp Basavanna Stage | Viroopaksheswara Temple Stage | Sasivekalu Ganapa Stage | Mananavami Dibba Stage
A Rasamanjari program by famous actors, actresses, music directors and playback singers from the Kannada film industry. A sound and light program by Vijayanagara Vaibhav at the Anelaya premises
Special Programmes: Yuva Goshti | Janapada Vaahini
ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ
One State. Many Worlds
Department of Tourism
Auspicious Presence of
Shri B.Z. Zameer Ahmed Khan
Hon'ble Minister for Housing, Waqf and Minority Welfare and Minister-in-charge of Vijayanagar and Beliary districts
Shri Thangadagi Shivaraj Sangappa
Hon'ble Minister for Backward Classes Welfare and Kannada & Culture Department Minister-in-charge Koppal District
Presided by
Shri H.R. Gaviyappa
Hon'ble Member ofLegislative Assembly Vijayanagara Constituency
Honorable Chief Minister Shri Siddaramaiah inaugurated the Hampi Utsav-2026 along with District In-charge Minister Zameer Ahmed Khan, Ministers H.K. Patil, Shivraj Tangadgi, Byrathi Suresh, MP Tukaram, MLA Gaviyappa and other representatives of the district.

Centre's Rs 1L-cr boost for urban transformation

Fund to encourage pvt sector's entry in redevelopment of cities across country

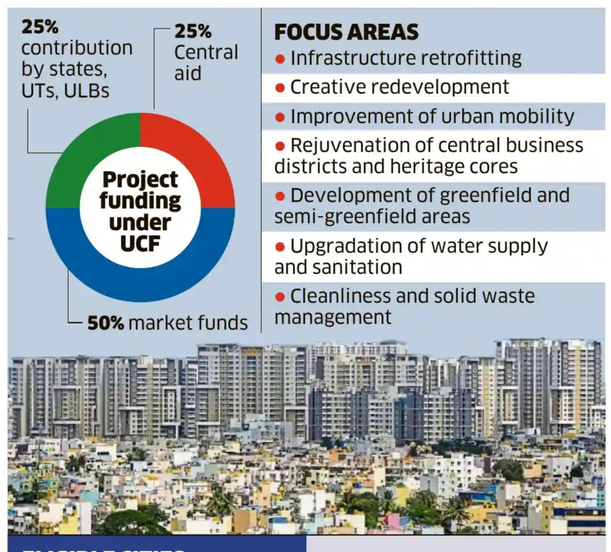
AJITH ATHRADY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Aiming for market-led transformation of India's urban areas, the Union government has approved the launch of the Urban Challenge Fund (UCF) with a total central assistance of Rs 1 lakh crore over a period of five years.

The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday took the decision to create the UCF with a focus on creative redevelopment of cities, improving urban mobility, and strengthening water and sanitation systems, Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting Ashwini Vaishnaw told reporters here on Saturday.

This was one of the major decisions taken in the last Cabinet meeting held at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) in the imperial-era South Block on Raisina Hills on Friday, following which the PMO was shifted to the Seva Teerth.

The move marks a "paradigm shift in urban development approach" from grant-based financing to a market-linked, reform-driven and outcome-oriented infrastructure creation, the government said in a statement.


25% contribution by states, UTs, ULBs
25% Central aid
Project funding under UCF
50% market funds
FOCUS AREAS
Infrastructure retrofitting
Creative redevelopment
Improvement of urban mobility
Rejuvenation of central business districts and heritage cores
Development of greenfield and semi-greenfield areas
Upgradation of water supply and sanitation
Cleanliness and solid waste management
ELIGIBLE CITIES
Cities with a population of 10 lakh or more
All state and UT capitals
Major industrial cities with a population of 1 lakh or more
All ULBs in hilly and Northeastern states as well as smaller ULBs with a population below 1 lakh
The UCF will leverage market finance, private participation and citizen- centric reforms for delivery of high-quality urban infrastructure. The Fund aims to build resilient, productive, inclusive and climate-responsive cities.
Government statement

The UCF will leverage market financing, private sector participation and citizen-centric reforms to deliver high-quality urban infrastructure, it said.

Under the UCF, central assistance will cover up to 25% of the project cost, provided at least 50% of the funding is mobilised from market sources such as municipal bonds, bank loans, or public-private partnerships.

▸ UCF, Page 6

Nod for startup corpus

The Cabinet has approved the second tranche of the Startup India Fund of Funds scheme with a corpus of Rs 10,000 crore. The key focus would be on deep-tech startups, early-growth-stage start-ups through smaller funds, among others.

Details on Page 7

Over 4.8 lakh kids in state severely stunted

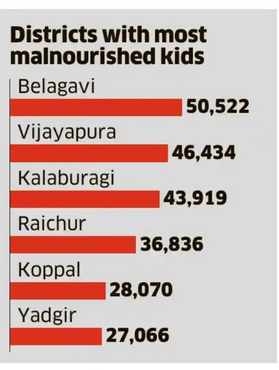
Belagavi has highest number of malnourished kids

RASHMI BELUR
BENGALURU, DHNS

Despite the state government's various nutrition schemes, over 4.79 lakh children between the age group of 0 and 6 are severely stunted.

According to government data, the highest number of stunted children identified are from Belagavi, the district represented by Women & Child Welfare Minister Laxmi Hebbalkar. The previous minister in the BJP government, Shashikala Jolle, was also from Belagavi.

According to data provided by Hebbalkar in reply to a question by BJP MLC Hemalatha Nayak during the recently held Legislature session, of the 32,29,644 active children registered in Anganwadi centres across the state, 32,17,112 were checked for their height and weight and 4,79,931 were found to be severely stunted.



According to the data, Belagavi has 50,522 severely stunted children followed by Vijayapura with 46,434, Kalaburagi (43,919), Raichur (36,836), Koppal (28,070) and Yadgir (27,066). There were fewer stunted children at Chikkamagaluru with 1,337 followed by Ramanagara with 2,264, Hassan (3,173), Dakshina Kannada (3,248), Kodagu (3,448) and Udupi (4,304).

In a reply, the minister said the state government has taken various measures to tackle malnutrition among children. Nutrition schemes include supplementary nutrition, serving boiled eggs twice a week and serving milk under Ksheera Bhagya scheme for children from six months to six years.

"A new initiative called Chiguru has been introduced at Ballari, Bidar, Kalaburagi, Yadgir, Raichur, Belagavi, Chitradurga and Vijayanagara districts. Under the programme, severely malnourished children will be identified and necessary health check-ups and nutritious food will be provided," the minister explained.

▸ Stunt, Page 6

Dad approaches govt as student from B'luru goes missing in US

BENGALURU, DHNS: A Bengaluru youth pursuing master's degree in the US has gone missing since Thursday, prompting his father to approach the Karnataka government for immediateintervention.

Saketh Sreenivasaiah, hailing from D Group Layout in Srigandada Kavalu, Bengaluru, was pursuing MSc at the University of California, Berkeley.

Saketh

He was reported to be missing on the morning of February 12.

According to family members, Saketh's housemate noticed his absence and searched all known locations before filing a missing person complaint with the local police in Berkeley.

"He left for the US in September 2025. He has been in touch with us every day and did not complain of any threats or fear. He has not been reachable since February 12 and his roommate has filed a complaint with the local police there. We haven't heard much after this," Saketh's father Sreenivasaiah told *DH*.

The police are said to have found Saketh's jacket, passport and gadgets near Anza Lake in Berkeley.

With anxiety mounting, Sreenivasaiah has submitted a formal letter to the state government seeking assistance in tracing his son.

▸ US student, Page 6

Foreign policy to be guided by interests of B'desh: Rahman

DHAKA, PTI

BNP chairman Tarique Rahman on Saturday prioritised law and order in Bangladesh "at any cost", saying the 13th general election opened a new chapter for building a safe and humane Bangladesh.

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) leader, who is set to become the PM, also spoke about revival of SAARC and how his government's foreign policy will be guided by "the greater interests of Bangladesh and its people".

"From today, we are all free, with the true essence of freedom and rights restored," said Rahman, 60, at a press conference here.

He, however, added that peace and law and order must be maintained at any cost. "We will not tolerate any kind of chaos."

BNP chief Tarique Rahman in Dhaka on Saturday. AP/PTI

He said the new government will follow a foreign policy that protects the country's interests in its dealings with China, India and Pakistan.

The foreign policy will be guided by "the greater interests of Bangladesh and its people", *Dhaka Tribune* reported quoting Rahman.

Rahman also spoke about revival of the South Asian regional grouping, SAARC, saying, "We will discuss with our friendly states and try to revive SAARC".

The BNP leader further said extradition of deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina "depends on the legal process".

Meanwhile, Bangladesh is learnt to be in the process of inviting Prime Minister Narendra Modi and several other regional leaders to attend the swearing-in ceremony of Rahman, on February 17.

It is learnt that Dhaka has already communicated its plan to New Delhi.

Water is our 7th guarantee, says Shivakumar

HAVERI, DHNS: Having already delivered on the five guarantees that we had promised, we have now added a sixth – land – through the Bhu Guarantee initiative, following which we will deliver on the seventh guarantee – water, claimed Deputy CM D K Shivakumar in Haveri.

Participating in an event organised to mark Congress's thousand days in office, Shivakumar said that farmers losing their land for the Upper Krishna Project were being given Rs 35 lakh to Rs 40 lakh per acre in compensation. "Our legal experts ensured that the Supreme Court ruled in our favour on the construction of another dam across Cauvery. Tamil Nadu's petition was dismissed. Work is under way on a detailed project report. If the Centre gives its nod for the project within three months, I will work towards supplying water to the arid Chikkaballapur and Kolar districts," he said.

"Water is our seventh guarantee. Besides ensuring access to clean drinking water, we will provide water for agriculture, and take steps to recharge groundwater aquifers," he added.

An IAF Rafale fighter jet takes off from the Emergency Landing Facility on Moran Bypass in Dibrugarh district of Assam. PM Narendra Modi inaugurated Northeast's first Emergency Landing Facility on Saturday. PTI

Cong has become more poisonous: PM in Assam

GUWAHATI, DHNS: Out of power for over 10 years, Congress has become more poisonous now, Prime Minister Narendra Modi stated in poll-bound Assam on Saturday while charging that the Opposition party has put the nation, including Assam, into trouble while the BJP was providing a solution.

"Congress kept Assam disturbed by pushing the state into bandh, violence and conflict. More than 1,000 people used to die in Assam every year and Congress was responsible for this. Now, many youths have given up weapons and joined the constitutional path and the process of peace and development," Modi said while addressing BJP booth-level workers in Guwahati.

"As Congress have remained out of power for more than 10 years, they have become more poisonous. Congress wants to push Assam into the tension again," he said.

Details on Page 7

Nvidia CEO to skip India AI Impact Summit

NEW DELHI, PTI: Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang has cancelled his visit to attend the India AI Impact Summit, the company said on Saturday.

The company will, however, send a delegation of senior officials led by its Executive Vice-President Jay Puri.

"Due to unforeseen circumstances, Jensen Huang is unable to travel to India at this time," the company said in a statement. Nvidia is one of the key players that dominate the AI ecosystem.

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Biklu Shiva murder case: Court rejects bail plea of advocate

BENGALURU DHNS: A special court for MPs/MLAs has rejected the bail petition filed by Ajeeth, an advocate named accused number 20 in the Shivaprakash alias Biklu Shiva murder case, in which BJP MLA from KR Puram Byrathi Basavaraj is also an accused.

Shivakumar was murdered on Meanee Avenue Road in Bharathinagar on July 15, 2025.

On July 24, the case was transferred to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID).

The CID had arrested Ajeeth on December 20, 2025, and he was granted interim bail.

Ajeeth, a resident of Ramamurthynagar, claimed that he was an advocate by profession and represented two accused (1 and 2) in the case. He had filed a bail application on behalf of Jagadish (accused number 1), before the high court.

It was claimed that he represented the accused and had conversations with them purely to prepare for the case, which would not amount to entering a conspiracy.

On the other hand, the special public prosecutor submitted that Ajeeth had a criminal background, and a rowdy sheet, opened against him in the K R Puram police station, was closed after a few years.

According to the police, Ajeeth was involved in hatching the criminal conspiracy in the Biklu Shiva murder.

The special court has directed Ajeeth to surrender before the police. In default of the same, the CID is at liberty to proceed in accordance with law, it said.

Bank assistant manager arrested for stealing gold to fund online betting

BENGALURU, DHNS

In a major breach of trust, an assistant manager of Indian Bank has been arrested for allegedly stealing gold ornaments, worth approximately Rs 4.12 crore, pledged by customers and kept in the bank's lockers at its Girinagar branch.

The accused allegedly siphoned off the gold ornaments, pledged by customers, for loans and used the proceeds to fund his online betting and gambling activities. A similar incident was reported within the Kengeri Police Station limits in October, 2025.

The accused has been identified as Kiran Kumar E (34), a native of Chittoor in Andhra Pradesh.

A senior police officer said that the fraud came to light on February 2, when a woman customer visited the branch to reclaim the pledged gold after repaying the loan.

During verification, the bank officials noticed a difference in the locker packets. A detailed internal audit subsequently revealed that gold was partially missing from 21 packets, while three packets were found empty.

Kiran Kumar

Preliminary investigation found that a total of 2,783 grams of gold, valued at approximately Rs 4.12 crore, had gone missing.

The police said that both the branch manager and the assistant manager had access to the locker keys. Taking advantage of the manager's absence on various occasions, Kiran allegedly removed small quantities of gold over a period, ensuring that the theft did not immediately come to light.

During internal questioning by the bank authorities, the accused reportedly confessed to the crime.

He is said to have pledged the stolen gold at private gold loan companies and used the money for online betting and gambling.

Based on a complaint filed by the bank's senior officials, the Girinagar police registered a case and immediately arrested the accused.

Based on his confession, the police have recovered around 700 grams of gold. Efforts are on to trace and recover the remaining gold and to identify any possible accomplices.

Similar case last year

On October, 7, 2025, the Kengeri police had arrested an assistant manager of Karur Vysya Bank and her techie husband for allegedly stealing nearly 4.95 kg of gold ornaments worth about Rs 5 crore pledged by customers for loans.

The accused, Ashwini, who was posted at the bank's Kengeri Satellite Town branch, allegedly removed pledged gold from the locker between June 2024 and October 2025 and replaced it with artificial or lighter jewellery.

The police said Ashwini was addicted to online gaming and to raise money for betting, she began removing pledged gold from the lockers.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah felicitates Muslim Malabar Association president N A Mohammed at the Association's anniversary celebration in the city on Saturday. Youth Congress leader Mohammed Nalpad, MLA N A Haris, Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar, Assembly Speaker U T Khader, political secretary to the chief minister Naseer Ahmed, Minister M C Sudhakar and others were present.

Malabar Muslim Association marks 90 years of service

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Malabar Muslim Association (MMA) marked its 90th anniversary on Saturday with a grand ceremony at the Jnana Jyothi Auditorium. The event highlighted the organisation's evolution from a 1930s burial society into a vital provider of education and healthcare in the city.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, DCM D K Shivakumar, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly U T Khader, Transport Minister Ramalinga Reddy, and BDA Chairman N A Haris were present.

Speaking at the event, Haris praised the MMA's resilience, noting that it served the people long before India gained independence. CM emphasised the association's secular approach, while organisers highlighted recent self-reliance initiatives, such as distributing auto-rickshaws and machinery to aspiring entrepreneurs.

The event saw the felicitation of MMA President N A Mohammed by the Chief Minister and DCM. Mohammed's journey from a stowaway seeking work in Sri Lanka to a successful entrepreneur and leader was shared as an inspiration for the youth. Under his 42-year leadership, the MMA has expanded to establish high schools, PU colleges, and health clinics equipped with dialysis units.

The celebration highlighted the MMA's ongoing commitment to the social and educational infrastructure of Bengaluru.

CENTRAL RAILWAY
SOLAPUR DIVISION
ENGINEERING WORKS

Divisional Railway Manager (Works), Central Railway, Solapur on behalf of President of India invites e-tender from the reputed firms / contractor for the following works. **Tender Notice No.** – 04-2026-SrDENCo. **Name of Work:** Infrastructure development of track machine siding in Solapur Division. **Approximate Cost of the work:** ₹21,43,42,085.19, **Earnest Money:** ₹12,21,700/-, **Completion Period of the work:** 12 Months, **Maintenance Period:** 12 Months, **Tender Notice No.** – 05-2026-SrDENCo. **Name of Work:** Improvement of Arch Bridges by extending barrel length and construction of Retaining wall, wing wall and ballast retainer on Bridge No. 561/2 DN (spn 3x5.6m), 577/1 DN (span 2 x 6.10m), 581/1 DN (span 2 x 6.10m) and 587/2 UP&DN (span 5 x 8.10m) in DUD-WD section of Solapur Division. Rebuilding of 04 ORN-3 Bridges (536/1A, 589/2, 589/3 DN SUR-WD section & 427/3 KWM-MRJ section) in Solapur Division. **Approximate Cost of the work:** ₹20,07,47,848.46, **Earnest Money:** ₹11,53,700/-, **Completion Period of the work:** 18 Months, **Maintenance Period:** 48 Months, **Last Date & Time of uploading quoted tender on www.ireps.gov.in** website: 04-2026-SrDENCo, 05-2026-SrDENCo – 05.03.2026 upto 15.00 Hrs. **Date & Time of Opening of tender on www.ireps.gov.in** 04-2026-SrDENCo, 05-2026-SDENCo– 05.03.2026 at 15.30 Hrs., The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website frequently before the date of closing of tender to note any changes/corrigenda issued for this tender. Website: **www.ireps.gov.in**

TRAVEL SAFELY, AVOID FOOTBOARD TRAVELLING 02

CENTRAL RAILWAY
SOLAPUR DIVISION
ENGINEERING WORKS

Divisional Railway Manager (Works), Central Railway, Solapur on behalf of President of India invites e-tender from the reputed firms/Contractor for the following works. **Tender No. 07-2026-SrDENCo, Name of Work:** 1.Construction of quarters in lieu of old quarters at SUR (Type-III 08 units & Type-IV 06 units) under ADEN/W/SUR sub division. 2.Construction of quarters in lieu of old quarters at WD(type-III 04 unit), SDB (RB-II 4 units & Type-III 02 unit), MR (Type-II 04 units) & NGS (Type-II 04 units) under ADEN/KLBG & ADEN/W/SUR sub division. 3. Construction of New quarters at SUR (Type-III 08 units), WDS (type-II 04 units), MA (type-II 04 units) & MVE (type-II 04 units) under ADEN/W/SUR. 4.Construction of New quarters at HG (type-II 8 units & type-III 2 unit), DUD (type-II 4 units) & AKOR (type-II 4 units) under ADEN/W/SUR. 5.Extension of PF-1, improvement to PF surface, Augmentation of water stands for crowd management at JEUR Station. **Approximate Cost of the work:** ₹21,79,46,514.21, **Earnest Money:** ₹12,39,700/-, **Completion period:** 12 Months, **Maintenance Period:** 24 Months, **Tender No. 08-2026-SrDENCo, Name of Work:** 1-Provision of Cover shed with proper fencing, Drinking water facility & other amenities during festival season for crowd management at Solapur station. 2 Carriage watering facility & Provision of holding area with all passenger amenities for crowd management at KLBG station. 3. Improvement to PF surface (PF 1&2 and PF 3&4), provision of retiring rooms at provision of COP at PF 1&2, RPF post at PF-1, Toilet blocks at PF 1&2 at KWV station. 4. Crowd Management–Raising PF-2 (ML to HL), toilet blocks at PF-01, Augmentation of booking office at UMD station. **Approximate Cost of the work:** ₹27,24,46,815.62, **Earnest Money:** ₹15,12,200, **Completion period:** 12 Months, **Maintenance Period:** 24 Months, **Last date & Time of uploading quoted tender on www.ireps.gov.in** website: 07-2026-SrDENCo, 08-2026-SrDENCo – 11.03.2026 upto 15.00 Hrs., **Date & Time of Opening of tender on www.ireps.gov.in** 07-2026-SrDENCo, 08-2026-SrDENCo – 11.03.2026 at 15:30 Hrs. The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website frequently before the date of closing of tender to note any changes/corrigenda issued for this tender. Website: **www.ireps.gov.in**

TRAVEL SAFELY, AVOID FOOTBOARD TRAVELLING 04

SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY

Tender Notice No. SBC-GSU-ENGG-2026-01

The undersigned, on behalf of the President of India, invites E-Tenders for the following works.

Name of the Work	Approx. Value
Composite tender -	Rs. 23,05,79,635.80

Heavy Lifting Bay with 50 EOTC gantry, 20m span x 84m length with two pits of 50m length (Road 3&4), stair case arrangement for overhead crane maintenance, provision of compressed air pipelines (500m) duly dismantling old battery section and abandoned Laboratory buildings, Extension of Inspection and Testing Facility (Road 3&4), 24m x 15m with pit line of 48m length, Realignment of Permanent way of Road 3 &4 for 250m, Heavy duty flooring outside the bays on Whitefield end - 20m x 10m, Leaned roof shed for Under Truck component storage 35m x 5m x 4m height, Service building for Modification M&P, Improvements in flooring of issue ward 46 m x 12.4m, Loco roof leak test facility, Widening of existing Road and provision of new road at Wheel Lathe area 200m x 5m wide with one track crossing, Construction of Toilet block (2 no's), Construction of GLR 2 lakh litres capacity (1 no), Extension of rain water trap drain - 110m with Heavy duty steel covers and CC flooring 60m x 25m duly dismantling old flooring, Battery Charging Room 20m x 8m and road approach flooring, Staff Hand wash facility, Proposed new scrap yard, Renovation of Officer Chambers (4no's), Scooter parking arrangements 120m x 4m in the Existing scrap yard, Heavy Duty flooring in Machine repair Bay and Under Truck Bay 70m x 12m including replacement of rain water drainage covers, Clean Room facility for Traction Motor Overhauling, TM Blowing Room, GLR for Effluent, Hand washing facility, Extension of Trip Shed on Road 1&2 from existing 72m to 120m with two additional inspection pits on each of the two lines including straightening of tracks, Cement concrete road of 5.5m wide to a length of 160 metres with 160 metre length one side barricading around Training centre and Two floor Service building for control room and meeting room with dust proof arrangements (2x10m x 16m) and other allied works in connection with Krishnarajapuram - Augmentation of Shed for increasing homing capacity from 150 - 175

Last date for submission of bids:
Upto 11:00 Hrs on 02-03-2026

For details log on: www.ireps.gov.in

Chief Project Manager, Gati Shakti
PUB/902/AAS/PRB/SWR/2025-26 **Bengaluru**

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South Western Railway-SWR SWRRLY @SWRAILWAYHQ @sw_railways

SOUTHERN RAILWAY

E-TENDER NOTICE No: SR-TVC0SnT(TEND)/3/2026/01, Dated : 12.02.2026

Senior Divisional Signal & Telecommunication Engineer, Southern Railway, Thiruvananthapuram- 14 for and on behalf of The President of India invites e-tenders for the following works.

Sl. No.	Tender No.	Name of work
1.	TVC-SNT-SIG-25-26-14	Comprehensive Annual maintenance Contract for the 54-Data Logger system 7-RTU and Control office Application (COA) in 11-stations in TVC division
2.	TVC-SNT-SIG-25-26-32	Signalling arrangements for the Proposed Relocation SPART Siding and Extension of PF No. 2. at Ernakulam Junction station.

Sl. No.	Cash value (Approx) (Rs.)	Earnest Money Deposit (Rs.)	Last Date for Receipt of Tender	Completion period
1.	14281931.09	221400.00	09.03.2026 upto 15.00 hrs	36 months
2.	17660654.68	238300.00	09.03.2026 upto 15.00 hrs	06 months

Complete details & tender document will be available at **www.ireps.gov.in**

Sr. Divisional Signal & Telecommunication Engineer, Southern Railway, Trivandrum - 14.

"जल है तो, हम हैं"।
कार्यपालक अभियंता का कार्यालय, लघु वितरणी प्रमण्डल संख्या–09, घाटशिला, शिविर–गालूडीह।

email: eemdd9gha.icha@gmail.com

निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना

संख्या– **WRD/IGC/MDD 09 Galudih/SBD-02/2025-26,**
दिनांक 13.02.2026

ई० निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना

क्रमांक	सूची	विवरणी
1	कार्य का नाम	Desilting, uprooting of jungle and shrubs including repair and restoration work of canal from km. 17.22 to km, 29.83 of KRMC.
2	प्राक्कलित राशि (रू० में)	Rs. 3,34,96,292.76
3	परिमाण विपत्र का मुल्य (रू० में)	Rs. 10,000/- (रूपये दस हजार) मात्र
4	अग्रधन की राशि (रू० में)	Rs. 3,35,000/- (रूपये तीन लाख पैंतीस हजार) मात्र
5	कार्य पूर्ण करने की अवधि	180 दिन
6	वेबसाईट पर निविदा प्रकाशन की तिथि एवं समय	20.02.2026 को 5:00 बजे अपराह्न
7	निविदा प्रपत्र डाउनलोड एवं अपलोड करने की तिथि एवं समय	20.02.2026 को 5:00 बजे अपराह्न से 11.03.2026 को 5:00 बजे अपराह्न तक।
8	निविदा खोलने की तिथि एवं समय	13.03.2026 को 1:00 बजे अपराह्न
9	निविदा प्रकाशित करने वाले पदाधिकारी का नाम एवं पता	ई० शिवराम गागराई, कार्यपालक अभियंता, लघु वितरणी प्रमंडल सं०–09 घाटशिला, शिविर–गालूडीह।
10	ई०–निविदा आमंत्रण सेल का हेल्प लाईन नं०	0657–3510191
11	ई०–प्रोक्योरमेंट पदाधिकारी का मोबाईल नं०	0657–3510191

नोट :–1. केवल ई–निविदा ही स्वीकार किया जाएगा।
2. प्राक्कलित राशि कम या अधिक हो सकती है, तदनुसार अग्रधन की राशि मान्य होगी।
विस्तृत जानकारी के लिए वेबसाईट http://jharkhandtenders.gov.in देखें।

(ई० शिवराम गागराई)
कार्यपालक अभियंता लघु वितरणी प्रमंडल सं०–09, घाटशिला, शिविर–गालूडीह।

PR 373004 Water Resource(25-26)D

CENTRAL RAILWAY
SOLAPUR DIVISION
ENGINEERING WORKS

Divisional Railway Manager (Works), Central Railway, Solapur on behalf of President of India invites e-tender from the reputed firms/contractor for the following works. **Tender No. 03-2026-SrDENCo, Name of Work:** Standardization of formation width – 213.2 Tkm in Solapur Division and TBR work – 32.6 km in DD-KWV section & TBR work-23.00 Tkm in Kurduwadi-Latur section & T/Out deep screening-37 nos. under Sr.DEN(C) jurisdiction. **Approximate Cost of the work:** ₹34,58,01,196.44, **Earnest Money:** ₹18,79,000/-, **Completion period of the work:** 12 Months, **Maintenance Period:** NIL, **Tender No. 06-2026-SrDENCo, Name of Work:** Annual Sectional Contract for Zone 'B' for Kurduwadi (BG)Sub division Daund (Excl) to Kurduwadi (Incl) including Kurduwadi Workshop Dhavalas, Bhalwani, Poplaj, Washimbe, Parewadi, Jinti, Malthan, Boribel, Bhigwan, Kettur, Jeur, Kem etc. in service building, office building & Staff qtrs. (Year: 2026-27, 2027-28 2028-29, 2029-30). Annual Sectional Contract for Zone 'C' ADEN(W)SUR sub division Kurduwadi(Excl) to Dudhani (incl) Wadsinge, Madha, Angar, Wakav, Malikpeth, Mohol, Bale, Akkalot road, Pakni, Tilati, Hotgi etc in service building, office building & staff qtrs. (Year: 2026-27, 2027-28, 2028-29, 2029-30). Annual Sectional Contract for Zone 'D' ADEN/KLBG sub division Dudhani (Excl) to Wadi (incl) Shahabad, Martur, Hirenanduru, Kalaburagi, Bablad, Kulali, Tajsultanpur etc in service building, office building & staff qtrs. (Year 2026-27, 2027-28 2028-29, 2029-30). Annual Sectional Contract for Zone 'E' ADEN/LUR sub division Kurduwadi (excl) to Latur Road (excl) Shendri, Kalamroad, Harangul, Dhoky, Yedshi, Dharashiv, Barshi Town, Pangari, Latur etc in service building, office building & staff qtrs.(Year: 2026—27, 2027-28, 2028-29, 2029-30). Annual Sectional Contract for Zone 'F' ADEN/PVR sub division Kurduwadi (excl) to Miraj (excl) Pandharpur, Modlimb, Sangola, Jath road, Dhalgaon, Salgare, Kauthemahakal, Arag etc. in service building, office building & staff qtrs. (Year: 2026-27, 2027-28, 2028-29, 2029-30) and Annual Sectional Contract for repairs, maintenance & cleaning of SUR Goods shed under. **Approximate Cost of the work:** ₹41,30,93,445.20, **Earnest Money:** ₹22,15,500/-, **Completion period:** 48 Months. **Maintenance Period:** 06 Months.

TRAVEL SAFELY, AVOID FOOTBOARD TRAVELLING 03

Publications Division
Ministry of Information and Broadcasting
Government of India

सत्यमेव जयते

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI)

AI-Based Digitisation Pilot Project

The Publications Division, a premier publishing house of the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Government of India, invites **Expression of Interest** from AI-driven technology companies, start-ups, and solution providers for a pilot project on digitisation of its publications.

Shortlisted entities will be required to demonstrate AI-based solutions for converting 200 books into audiobooks. They would also be required to make an in-person technical presentation along with their proposal and estimated budget.

Interested companies may email details of their relevant experience and brief company profile to **bm-dpd@gov.in**

The Publications Division reserves the right to accept or reject any proposal without assigning reasons.

CBC 22213/11/0006/2526

e-Procurement Cell
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER,
SPECIAL WORKS DIVISION, BUILDING CONSTRUCTION DEPARTMENT, Ranchi

CORRIGENDUM-1

e-Procurement Tender Reference No:- BCD/EE, Special Works Div, BCD, Ranchi-41/2025-26 Date:-06.02.2026, PR No-372536 Building(25-26).D Proposed Construction of Jharkhand Bhawan at Vashi, Navi Mumbai, Maharastra कार्य से संबंधित है, के तिथियों में अपरिहार्य कारणवश संशोधन किया जा रहा है जिसका विवरणी निम्नवत है:–

क्र० सं०	मद	पूर्व की तिथि	संशोधित तिथि
1	वेबसाईट पर निविदा प्रकाशन की तिथि	13.02.2026	17.02.2026
2	प्री बीड मिटिंग की तिथि/समय	24.02.2026 at 1.00 P.M	26.02.2026 at 1.00 P.M
3	बिड प्राप्ति के लिए अन्तिम तिथि/समय	16.03.2026 at 1.00 P.M	18.03.2026 at 1.00 P.M
4	निविदा खोलने की तिथि/समय	17.03.2026 at 1.00 P.M	19.03.2026 at 1.00 P.M

शेष सभी शर्तें यथावत रहेंगी।

Nodal Officer,
e-Procurement Cell,
Office of the Executive Engineer, Special Works Division
Building Construction Department, Ranchi .

PR 373003 (Building) 25-26 (D)

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8880 003 003
PRM/KA/RERA/1251/310/PR/210324/006724 G+14
SILKBOARD
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₹ 87.62 L - 1.38 Cr*
8880 013 310
PRM/KA/RERA/1251/472/PR/250225/007524 G+14
AIRPORT ROAD
NEAR PRESTIGE TECH IT PARK
₹ 87.89 L - 1.21 Cr*
8880 465 465
PRM/KA/RERA/1251/310/PR/150223/005721 G+14
MYSORE ROAD
NEAR CHALLAGHATTA METRO STN.
₹ 67.28 - 95.28 Lakhs*
8880 461 461
PRM/KA/RERA/1251/308/PR/281125/008287 G+14
JIGANI
5 MINS. APC CIRCLE
₹ 58.45 - 92.06 Lakhs*
8880 003 003
PRM/KA/RERA/1251/310/PR/151223/006489 G+3
BANASHANKARI
OPP. NPS SCHOOL (3 & 4-BHK)
₹ 1.45 - 2.17 Cr*
8880 461 461
PRM/KA/RERA/1250/301/PR/251024/007178 G+14
YELAHANKA
5 MINS. RAJANUKUNTE
₹ 54.85 - 97.21 Lakhs*
8880 465 465
PRM/KA/RERA/1251/308/PR/160824/006973 G+14
BANNERGHATTA RD.
NEAR KOPPA GATE
₹ 62.42 - 85.23 Lakhs*
8880 013 310
RM/KA/RERA/1251/308/PR/230126/008427 G+4
SARJAPURA
SARJAPUR - ATTIBELE ROAD
₹ 63.60 - 83.25 Lakhs*
8880 003 003
PRM/KA/RERA/1251/308/PR/160824/006972 G+4
HOSA ROAD METRO
NEAR ELECTRONIC CITY
₹ 67.92 L - 1.34 Cr*
8880 013 310
PRM/KA/RERA/1250/304/PR/150224/006622 G+14
WHITEFIELD
SOUKYA ROAD
₹ 70.65 L - 1.06 Cr*
8880 461 461
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Disclaimer: Information provided in this advertisement is for reference only, and all data is sourced internally. The images, illustrations, and artist's impressions used in this advertisement are for representational purposes only. The prices mentioned are indicative and base prices. Any offers, discounts, or incentives mentioned in this advertisement are subject to specific terms and conditions. All taxes, registration charges, stamp duty, and any other statutory payments are applicable as per government regulations. All directions, locations, and landmarks are approximate. Please use reliable resources for accurate travel times. Mentioning a specific product, process, or service does not imply endorsement. Please contact our Sales Team for detailed information about specific projects, pricing, availability, and other inquiries. DS-MAX Properties ensures that all its projects comply with the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act, 2016 (RERA) and its regulations. Visit : www.rera.karnataka.gov.in
*T & C Apply

◆ IN THE CITY ◆

GENERAL

Book Launch: Release of "Karavaliya Rakta-Kanniru" by Irshad Uppinangadi; Priyank Kharge, Kishore Kumar, and Dinesh Amin Mattu to be present; Aharnishi Prakashana; Gandhi Bhavan, Kumarakrupa Road; 10.30 am.

Book launch and felicitation: Release of commemorative volume of Kumara Chandrashekharanatha Swamiji, organic fair, and science exhibition; R Ashoka, Shobha Karandlaje, and Dr C N Manjunath to be present; Vishwa Vokkaligara Mahasamsthana Mutt premises, Kengeri; 5 pm.

Sant Sevalal Jayanti: inauguration CM Siddaramaiah, DCM D K Shivakumar, and Shivaraj S Tangadagi to be present; Dept of Kannada and Culture; Nayana Auditorium, Kannada Bhavana, JC Road; 6 pm.

CULTURAL

Lecture: 'Natakava Nodu Brahmanda Rangasthaladi' by S Suryaprakash Pandit to mark the birth anniversary of Master Hirannaiah; Suchitra Auditorium, 9th Main, Banashankari; 10 am.

Music and Dance Festival: 'Naada Natyanjali' night-long Shivaratri festival; Ramalinga Reddy, Tejasvi Surya, and Uday B Garudachar to be present; Sringeri Shankara Mutt, Shankarapuram; 5 pm.

Music concert: 'Swar Utsav' featuring Santoor by Shashank Gokhale and vocal by Sanjeev Abhyankar; Ajinkya Joshi (tabla) and Vyasamurti Katti (harmonium) to perform; Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Race Course Road; 5 pm.

Prof MPL Sastry Music Fest: Conferring "Sangeetha Kala Bhushana" award; vocal performance by S Shankar and S Ramani; MES College, Prof. MPL Sastry Road, Malleshwaram; 6 pm.

Theatre: Playshow "Olacharandi Purana" directed by Archana Shyam; Antaranga team; Ranga Shankara, JP Nagar; 7.30 pm

Mahashivaratri concert: Venkatesh Sharma, vocal; S Yashaswi, violin; Mysore R Srinivasa Prasad, mridangam; V S Ramesh, morching, at 5.30 pm, Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira, 9th Main, Banashankari 2nd Stage.

RELIGIOUS

Maha Shivaratri Celebrations: Rudra Puja, midnight meditation, and discourse by Sri Sri Ravi Shankar; Art of Living International Center, Kanakapura Road; 7.15 pm.

◆ CITY WEATHER ◆

FORECAST

Mainly Clear sky

TEMPERATURES

Maximum	31.4°C
Minimum	16.3°C
Rainfall (as 8:30 am)	--
Humidity (as 5:30 pm)	35%
Sunset (Feb 15)	6:25 pm
Sunrise (Feb 16)	6:43 am
Moonrise	4:12 am
Moonset	3:43 pm

(Relevant data recorded at 5.30 pm) Source: IMD

Adivasis urge government to stop profiting from their lands

BENGALURU, DHNS

Adivasis from Nagarahole have pointed to the letter written by the United Nations Human Rights committee to urge the state and the Union governments recognise their rights and end the dispossession.

At a press conference the Nagarahole Adivasi Jammapale Hakku Sthapana Samiti opposed the meeting of the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) organised by the Centre and state in Bandipur. "IBCA is yet another liberal tool to legitimise extraction of forests, people and animals on a global scale," it said.

The forum said the IBCA pushes "false and extractive" agendas like biodiversity offsetting, ecosystem services, immersive wildlife tourism and green credits which are "nothing but large scale greenwashing schemes" of the global market. It attacked the national and international NGOs for seeking to "profit from indigenous lands and lives" in the name of tiger conservation.

"The committee of the United Nations formally wrote to the Government of India, recognising the decades-long human rights violations faced by indigenous people in Nagarahole and across India's tiger reserves. Yet, to this day, there has been no response from the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, National Tiger Conservation Authority, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, the Karnataka government or any other responsible authority," a statement said.

ಪಿಎಂ ಶ್ರೀ ಕೇಂದ್ರೀಯ ವಿದ್ಯಾಲಯ ಎ.ಎಸ್.ಸಿ. ಕೇಂದ್ರ (ದಕ್ಷಿಣ) ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು
PM SHRI KENDRIYA VIDYALAYA
A.S.C. CENTRE (SOUTH), BENGALURU
No. 1, VICTORIA ROAD, BENGALURU 560047
Email: kvascbgr@gmail.com Website: https://ascbangalore.kvs.ac.in/
Phone No.: 080-25302862

Walk-in-Interview for Contractual Teachers

S. NO	POST	REGISTRATION TIME
1	PGT: ENGLISH, HINDI, MATHEMATICS, PHYSICS, CHEMISTRY, BIOLOGY, ECONOMICS, HISTORY, GEOGRAPHY, POLITICAL SCIENCE, COMMERCE, COMPUTER SCIENCE and COMPUTER INSTRUCTOR	19/02/2026 (Thursday) (08:30 AM To 10:00 AM)
2	TGT: ENGLISH, HINDI, SANSKRIT, MATHS, SCIENCE, SOCIAL SCIENCE, AI and PRT	19/02/2026 (Thursday) (08:30 AM To 10:00 AM)
3	MISCELLANEOUS: YOGA INSTRUCTOR, SPORTS COACH, DANCE/MUSIC TEACHER, SPECIAL EDUCATOR, ART AND CRAFT EDUCATION INSTRUCTOR, VOCATIONAL INSTRUCTOR, COUNSELLOR, KANNADA TEACHER, NURSE and BALVATIKA	23/02/2026 (Monday) (08:30 AM To 10:00 AM)

Note: For Qualifications and other details kindly visit the website https //:ascbangalore.kvs.ac.in

Principal

KENDRIYA VIDYALAYA, RAIL WHEEL FACTORY
Under the Ministry of Education, Govt. of India
YELAHANKA NEW TOWN, BENGALURU - 560 064.
Phone : 080-28460979 (O), Fax No.: 080-28566968
E-Mail : kvrwf123@gmail.com, Website : https://wapyelahanka.kvs.ac.in

WALK - IN INTERVIEW

Walk - In Interview for the following posts on purely Part Time / Contractual basis for the academic Year 2026-27. **Reporting Time : 09.00 a.m.**

DATE	POST
23rd Feb. 2026	**Post Graduate Teachers** : Hindi, English, Chemistry, Physics, Maths, Biology and Computer Science. **Trained Graduate Teachers** : Hindi, English, Social Studies, Maths, Science & Sanskrit. **Others** : Computer Instructor (Primary & Secondary)
24th Feb. 2026	PRT, Sports Coach (Male & Female), Staff Nurse, Kannada Teacher, Education Counsellor, Special Educator, Dance Teacher, Yoga Instructor & Balvatika-III Teacher.

For detail of Eligibility, Educational Qualifications and Application Form, kindly log on to the **Website of Kendriya Vidyalaya, Rail Wheel Factory at https://wapyelahanka.kvs.ac.in**. Candidates should report to the **Venue at 09:00 a.m.** for the interview with original, set of photocopies of all necessary documents and recent passport size photograph. If applying for more than one post, submit separate application forms along with all required documents.

No TA/DA will be paid by the Vidyalaya for Walk-in-Interview.

The timings of the Interview will be from 09:00 a.m. to 01:00 p.m.

Sd/- PRINCIPAL

SRI SRI SRI SIDDESHWARA TEMPLE TRUST
SRI SRI SRI SIDDESHWARA CONVENTION HALL
No. 181, 80Feet TVS Road, Atthibele, Anekal Taluk, Bengaluru Dist
Mahashivarathri Pooje
On Sunday, 15th February 2026
-: Programme :-
Rudrabhishekam & Rudra Homam
Annadanam : 6.00 a.m. to Midnigh 12.00
SRI SRI SRI SIDDESHWARA CONVENTION HALL
The poor below the poverty line will be provided with a free 'golden thali' on the day of the wedding at our wedding hall. Food will be provided from 1 pm to 10 pm on that day. Additionally, hall booking is free for the poor below the poverty line. You can book a hall for your home or office functions. Like the Karnataka Dharmasthala temple, the temple offers food offerings every Monday from 1 pm to 10 pm.
The Temple is being constructed by Sri. M.RAJSHEKAR-B.com, a Retired Income Tax Officer and his Wife Smt.S. RANJINIAMMAL is the PRESIDENT TRUST OF THE TEMPLE and Sri. M.RAJASHEKAR is the Managing Trustee of the temple. Mr. M.RAJASHEKAR was born in a Agriculture family at Lakkavalli, Tarekere Taluk, Chikkamangalur District, Karnataka.
The Entire Family of Mr. M.RAJASHEKAR is strong devotee of LORD SHIVA. This temple is the outcome inspiration of Sri. M. RAJASHEKAR and his Wife Smt. S. RANJINIAMMAL when they visited Sri. BRIDESHWARA TEMPLE situated at TANJORE, Tamil Nadu. After seeing this temple in Tanjore they decided to construct an identical Temple in their land situated at Attibele measuring 6 and half acres which was previously owned by the family of Honorable the PRIME MINISTER OF INDIA Sri. H.D.DEVE GOWDAJI and he his also a strong devotee of this temple.
The estimated construction of this temple is Forty Five Crores and the entire coast of Sixty Four Crores is being borne by Sri. M. RAJASHEKAR and his wife Smt. S. RANJINIAMMAL. The BHOOMI POOJA of the temple was performed by on 27th February 2014, the construction work is going on continuously and now it is at the stage of completion, the entire Temple is being constructed by using STONE with good culture having spiritual background.
At present 63 feet RAJA GOPURAM is constructed and Erection with worth of Rupees Nine Lakhs Navarathan on December 29th 2021. Within a due course the compound wall of 5 and a half feet will be completed. And on 1 of March 2022, Erection of Kalasha on the Gopuram at 11.00am Onwards. Everyday 500 devotees are visiting the temple, and especially on Monday nearly 1000 to 3000 devotees are visiting the temple to the Blessing of LORD Sri Sri Sri SIDDESHWARA
Sri. M. RAJASHEKAR and his wife Smt. S.RANJINIAMMAL wishes to perform KUMBHABHISHEKAM very shorly with the presene of the Hon'ble PRESIDENT OF INDIA and PRIME MINISTER OF INDIA. Any person visits the temple will realize the aforesaid events in their life also On 15-01-2025 we are open SRI SRI SIDDESHWARA CONVENTION HALL (Kalyana Mantapa), we decided to give free for poor people on the occasion of marriage and temple will provide Mangalya and free Annadhana from 1.00pm Onwards Every Monday Annadhana will be giving to all people from 1.00pm Onwards like Dharmasthala.
Sri Siddeshwara Swamy
Parvathi Amma
Mahaganapathi
Subramanya
ALL ARE CORDIALLY INVITED.
Smt. S. Ranjini Ammal (Late)
Chairman
(Siddeshwara Temple Trust)
Shri M. Rajasekhar
Founder & Director
(Siddeshwara Temple Trust)
Retd. Income Tax Officer
Mob.: 9448844679 / 9686479293

PASSING TO PAUSING Sustainability a casualty for eye-catching art work in CBD areas

Street walls want to talk. Will powers that be walk the talk?

PUSHKAR V
BENGALURU, DHNS

The boy pulled his mother's hand on Church Street not towards a toy shop or cafe, but toward a painted wall. He stood there staring at a giant face splashed in colours as if it might speak to him. People slowed down, strangers smiled at each other, phones came out. For a brief moment, the street felt like a gallery without doors. That is what public art does, it turns passing into pausing and roads into shared rooms.

Public art means art placed in open spaces, on streets, flyovers, metro stations, parks and market walls, free for everyone to see.

It does not ask for a ticket. It does not ask who you are. In a city of concrete and glass towers, dangling cables and steel columns, it is one of the few things that belongs to all.

In Bengaluru, this idea is not new. The Malleswaram wall art project once turned quiet lanes into an open gallery. Murals celebrated local community and daily life.

But over time, the paint faded. Some walls were repainted and there was no clear maintenance plan. What started strong slowly became a memory.

A similar story unfolded on Church Street. During festivals and city events, murals bloomed across shutters and side lanes. Today, the wall art on Church Street still attracts visitors who stop for photos.

Poornima Sukumar, project director of the city's popular art collective Aravani Art Project, told *DH* that an artwork can "represent a city's past, present and future, not just through paintings".

She said continuity is difficult because projects must be recommissioned and funded again. Clearer, easier permissions from authorities would encourage more people to step forward and create art, Poornima added.

A daily wage worker, a software engineer, a street vendor and a school child can all stand before the same mural. It creates a common ground. In some projects, diverse communities have not just watched, but taken part.

Collectives like Jaaga and the Aravani Art Project have involved local residents, queer communities, students and volunteers in painting walls together.

In 2012, Urban Avantgarde, organised by the Goethe Institut with Jaaga and the state government, brought German street artists to collaborate with local artists to create murals and wall art in the city. It was followed by many such collaborations. But the momentum did not last.

The future of public art in Bengaluru depends on policy, participation and patience. Urban expert Ashwin Mahesh stressed the need for stronger systems, saying, "The Bangalore Urban Arts Commission must be reconstituted. Such a body made up of artists, architects and planners, is essential to preserve city aesthetics and heritage. Painting pillars is important, but that alone will not elevate the city's aesthetics".

Bengaluru has also seen sculptures by renowned artist Yusuf Arakkal placed in public areas along with temporary installations in parks and art at metro stations. Despite these examples, there was no sustained citywide plan to carry the momentum forward.

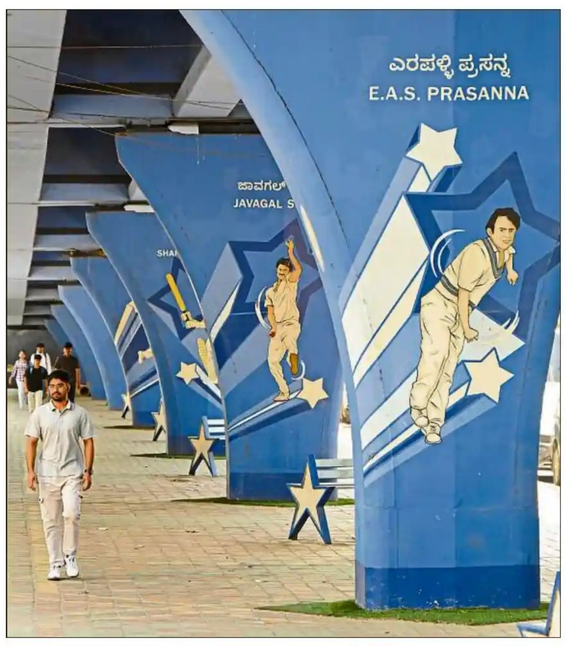
Urban expert V Ravichandar told *DH* that public art "enriches a neighbourhood", but pointed out that getting permissions from multiple authorities often hinders and discourages people from taking up such projects.

He urged GBA to make clearances easier and suggested creating "20 to 30 designated locations, not just in central business district (CBD)," where artworks could be displayed for a few months and then rotated to give others opportunities.

Ravichandar said a framework and progressive policy is "the need of the hour" to enable artworks, noting Bengaluru has immense potential and that private players are willing to fund projects if approvals are streamlined.

Why do these efforts end so soon? Artists point to funding gaps. Public art cannot survive on one-time enthusiasm. It needs a budget line, a maintenance contract and local ownership.

Globally, cities show how this works. In Georgetown (US), Penang (Malaysia), street art has created tourism trails that draw international visitors. In Berlin, the East Side Gallery has turned a historic wall into an open air gallery. Murals there are not merely decorations, but destinations too.



Art works at Shivananda Circle (left) and K H Road (Double Road). DH PHOTOS/B K JANARDHAN

Will incorporate wall art in design stage: GBA chief

The future of public art in Bengaluru depends on policy, participation and patience. Greater Bengaluru Authority chief commissioner Maheshwar Rao explains why earlier efforts did not last.

"In Bengaluru, many earlier public art installations faded or disappeared primarily due to 3 reasons: absence of structured maintenance mechanism, lack of ownership clarity between agencies and use of materials not designed for long-term outdoor exposure in high-traffic urban conditions," he told *DH*.

He said GBA is working to integrate public art as a planned component of urban development projects, similar to streetscaping, parks and public infrastructure. "Art installations will be considered at design stage itself," he said.

There is already infrastructure that can support more art. Metro stations, under flyovers, lake perimeters, market walls, skywalk pillars, are all ready canvases.

Rangoli Metro Art Centre stands as proof that a dedicated public art space can thrive when curated well.

Artist groups have asked for clearer support and students and volunteers remain ready, what the city needs now is continuity.

Cases of underage driving surge in city over a year

Easy access to vehicles, lack of parental supervision driving trend

DH SPECIAL

ASHWIN B M
BENGALURU, DHNS

A horrific multi-vehicle crash near Hoskote in the early hours of Friday claimed seven lives, six of them teenagers - exposing a lethal trend of reckless behaviour and underage driving among the city's youth.

The number of cases registered in Bengaluru City under the category of "underage driving" for various offences under the traffic violations such as overspeeding, signal jumping, no helmets, no seat belt etc has dramatically jumped in just one year from 197 cases in 2024 with a fine amount of Rs 3.66 lakh to 414 cases in 2025 collecting a fine amount of Rs 4.16 lakh.

The cases in this category, registered till February 13 this year, stand at 62 with a fine collection of Rs 66,000. The cases registered in the previous years aren't any better. They were 192 in 2022 and dropped to 95 in 2023.

Speaking to *DH*, Karthik Reddy, Joint Commissioner Traffic, (Bengaluru City), said the Bengaluru Traffic Police regularly conducts awareness drives, "When we book wheelie cases we also make the parents accused in the FIR. This is an indirect message that parents must not give vehicles to their children who have not crossed the age of 18 years. The first lessons and adherence to rules start at home."

The latest incident involved a Mahindra XUV 700 carrying six minors from Bengaluru on an unauthorised joyride. Travelling at high speeds on the Bengaluru-Devanahalli highway, the vehicle was captured on toll plaza CCTV footage at 4.15 am.

According to Bengaluru Rural SP Chandrakanth, the car first struck a motorcycle ridden by Gagan, a resident of Devanayakanahalli, killing him instantly. The SUV then rammed into a canter truck with such force that it dislodged the truck's rear wheels before veering off and crashing into a median 150 meters away.

Families in shock

The aftermath has left families reeling in shock. Many parents were unaware their children had even left the house.

"We were all asleep. We didn't even know he had left the house," a relative of 16-year-old Arhan Sharief told. The family was reportedly preparing for a pilgrimage to Mecca scheduled for the following Monday. "He didn't even know how to ride a two-wheeler properly," the relative added.

Meanwhile, the mother of the biker Gagan, Lakshmidevi who is visually impaired recalled her last conversation with her son at 9 pm. "I told him not to go, but he said he had to finish his work. Now, my world is dark in every sense," she sobbed.

Police revealed that the vehicle belonged to the uncle of one of the boys, Ayan, and had been taken without permission. None of the minors possessed a driving licence.

A senior police officer attributed the surge to "easy access to vehicles, lack of parental supervision, and thrill-seeking influenced by social media." The law, the officer said, is clear. The registered owner of the vehicle and the legal guardians are held strictly responsible for allowing a minor to drive.

The psychology

City-based counsellor Ramya S highlighted significant parenting failures in the Gen Z era, noting that academic stress and deteriorating family values often leave children seeking validation from peers.

"Much like gadget addiction, joyriding is becoming a peer-pressure driven menace," Ramya explained. "We are seeing a challenge where work-life imbalance leads to 'over-freedom' as a substitute for quality time. When parents don't invest in building a child's confidence and moral compass, the vacuum is filled by risky behaviors. For a teenager, the car becomes a symbol of status or manhood."

Cases of underage driving

2024: 197 (Fine: **Rs 3.66 lakh**)

2025: 414 (Fine: **Rs 4.16 lakh**)

2026 (till Feb 13): 62 cases registered (Fine: **Rs 66,000**)

Indo-American Chamber of Commerce holds walkathon

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Indo-American Chamber of Commerce (IACC), Karnataka Chapter, organised a walkathon at Cubbon Park on Saturday, bringing together over 80 participants from various industries.

The event began with the participants taking part in a guided 5-km walk through the park.

The participants were paired to facilitate one-on-one interactions, encouraging conversations outside conventional boardroom settings.

The initiative aimed to combine physical activity with professional engagement in a relaxed environment.

Gerald Manoharan, chairman of the IACC Karnataka Chapter, said the choice of Cubbon Park reflected the intent to blend community spirit with dialogue and collaboration.

"Cubbon Park has long been a symbol of community and tranquillity in Bengaluru. Today's walkathon has helped us harness that spirit—blending wellness, dialogue, and collaboration. We saw participants not only engaging in conversations but also forming meaningful relationships that will strengthen our business community," he said.

Founded in 1968, the IACC works to promote bilateral trade and economic engagement between India and the United States.

More restaurants now add 'voluntary' tag to service charge on bills

ASRA MAVAD
BENGALURU, DHNS

Despite clear directions from consumer authorities that restaurants cannot mandatorily levy service charges, many eateries in Bengaluru continue to discreetly slip it into the customer bills.

After a recent crackdown by the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) on restaurants in the city automatically adding a service charge to the bill, several restaurants, have now started adding the term 'voluntary' next to the charge.

According to the guidelines issued by the CCPA and upheld the Delhi High Court, compulsory service charges in restaurants and hotels are considered an unfair trade practice under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019. The rules are explicit: Service charges must not be automatically added, cannot be collected under other names, and must be clearly presented as voluntary. Violators may face penalties of up to Rs 50,000.

A pan-Asian restaurant in MG Road claimed that adding the term 'voluntary' in the bill, kept them in the clear. "Our legal team has looked into this and we are accordingly following the law. We added the voluntary service charge last week, and if any customer asks us to remove it, we immediately do so," the manager of the restaurant shares. A few more restaurants in Kalyan Nagar and Indiranagar have also started adding the 'voluntary' tag to the bill in 2026.

Most restaurants *DH* spoke to claimed that only an average of 15% of customers requested for the service charge to be removed, while a majority paid it willingly and skipped the tip.

"We levy the service charge because there isn't a sufficient tipping culture in India. It is solely to help the staff. And from our understanding, it is not illegal to levy a voluntary charge," a restaurateur with 20 dining outlets across the city said.

However, a new survey by Local Circles found that 59% of the surveyed consumers across the country, who visited air conditioned restaurants in the last month, paid the service charge. The survey also shared that the percentage of consumers who paid the service charge rose from 43% in 2022 to 59% in 2026.

Several restaurants not only add the default service charge but also apply GST on that amount, which diners believe is unfair. However, overall diners shared that restaurants comply with having the charge removed without any resistance.

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New OPD complex to come up at Nimhans

BENGALURU, DHNS: The National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (Nimhans) has approved the construction of a new OPD complex at an estimated cost of Rs 440 crore.

The complex will house 590 clinic and consultation rooms with the capacity to serve over five thousand patients every day.

Making this announcement on the 51st Institute Day, marking 51 years of service, Nimhans director Dr Pratima Murthy said that this will double the current capacity of the institution and reduce the physical burden on patients of moving from one corner to another corner of the hospital.

"The last five years have witnessed the highest footfall of patients in the history of the institution. In 2024 alone, we recorded over 6.8 lakh patient visits, which is the highest ever. More than eight thousand neurosurgeries were performed. We have had referrals from different corners of the country," Dr Pratima Murthy said.

The journey of Nimhans is a steady transformation from modest beginnings as the Mysore Government Mental Health Hospital to becoming a national leader in mental health and neurosciences. It has been built patiently decade after decade, she said.

"The Telemanas with 32 lakhs calls and increasing, and the Karnataka Brain Health initiative with the health department are the most noble programmes of Nimhans in last 5 years," said the director.

The chief guest for the event, Lokayukta Justice B S Patil said, "Nimhans has been doing great service in the field of medical service, research and training. The medical service extended to the needy population to help lead a dignified life is remarkable."

VTU students to build prototypes for upskilling

BENGALURU, DHNS

The initiative has already been launched at the varsity's four regional centres and three constituent colleges.

As part of its persistent efforts to equip students with hands-on training in skills that will hold them in good stead when they enter the job market, Visvesvaraya Technological University (VTU) will soon be making it mandatory for students to build a prototype to earn a credit in the Innovation and Design Thinking subject.

The subject is already being taught at all the varsity's affiliate colleges in the first semester. "Currently, students are being awarded one credit in the subject although there is no practical work involved. This will be changed and building of a prototype made mandatory," said VTU Vice-Chancellor S Vidyashankar.

VTU is also planning on building an app to enable students photographs and videos of the prototype as it is being built. Vidyashankar said, "We want the students to identify a problem and evolve a solution to the same through analysis. The app, meanwhile, will enable the university to monitor the prototype's development."

The initiative has already been launched at the varsity's four regional centres and three constituent colleges, where around 2,000 students are building prototypes, which will be on display on Open Day scheduled to be held on February 28.

HC orders Tumakuru City Corporation to decide on application to adjust excess property tax

BENGALURU, DHNS: The pendency of a writ petition shall not, by itself, be treated as a ground to withhold consideration of representations or applications filed prior thereto, the High Court of Karnataka has observed in a recent judgement.

"Unless there is a specific order of stay or restraint passed by a competent court, authorities are obligated to discharge their statutory and administrative duties by passing timely orders," Justice Suraj Govindaraj said, while directing the state government to issue suitable instructions to all subordinate offices in this regard.

The petitioner, B G Srinivasa Rao, a resident of Tumakuru, had filed a representation to the city corporation in 2017, requesting to adjust excess property tax paid by him during the previous years.

He filed the writ petition in 2018 after the authorities did not respond to his representation. During the hearing, the Tumakuru City Corporation contended that it could not take a decision on the representation since the petition was pending in the high court. The court called such submission untenable.

"Administrative authorities cannot cite the pendency of judicial proceedings as a justification for inaction, particularly when the grievance before the Court itself arises from such inaction due to non-consideration of such representations," Justice Govindaraj said.

The court said, "The conduct of the respondents in keeping the representations pending for several years without passing any order whatsoever is arbitrary and cannot be countenanced. Administrative delay of this nature undermines public confidence in governance and results in avoidable litigation before constitutional courts."

The court directed the Corporation to consider the representation submitted by the petitioner in August 2017 within 60 days. "It is made clear that this court has not expressed any opinion on the entitlement of the petitioner in terms of the representation," the court said.

FLAW VS FLAW FIGHT Machine-to-manual back shift for B'luru civic polls entails high costs

Tryst again with ballots: 'Restoring trust' or 'regressing to past'?

PRATHIMA NANDAKUMAR
BENGALURU, DHNS

The state election commission's (SEC) decision to use ballot papers instead of electronic voting machines (EVMs) for all upcoming local body elections has triggered a sharp political debate, with the ruling Congress defending the move as "one that restores public trust" and the BJP terming it "regressive".

The most-discussed election is in the state capital where five municipalities under Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) need to go to polls before June 30, as per a Supreme Court directive. An estimated 88.91 lakh voters across 369 wards are expected to cast their votes.

In September 2025, the Cabinet favoured ballot papers for local body elections. The SEC later clarified that the Greater Bengaluru Governance Act permitted the use of either ballot papers or EVMs.

Karnataka Congress incharge Randeep Singh Surjewala welcomed the move as a "bold decision" that would enhance transparency and restore voter confidence. He linked it to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's long-standing demand for greater scrutiny of EVMs and the party's "vote chori" campaign.

Union Minister Pralhad Joshi criticised the switch, calling it a step backwards.

"Karnataka is a pioneer of the EVM revolution. Bengaluru was among the first cities where EVMs were used experimentally in the 1980s, and the state formally adopted them in the 1990s. The Congress government is now obstructing progress," he said.

India's transition to EVMs began in 1982, and they were deployed nationwide by the 2004 Lok Sabha elections to curb booth capturing, ballot stuffing and invalid votes.

In a 2013 judgment, the Supreme Court directed the phased introduction of VVPAT (Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail) to enhance transparency, without questioning the validity of EVMs. In 2024, the apex court rejected pleas for a return to full paper ballots and reaffirmed confidence in the EVM system, while expanding VVPAT verification in select booths.

While EVMs remain mandatory for Assembly and Lok Sabha elections, state election commissions have the discretion to choose the mode of voting for local body polls under state laws.

The debate has revived arguments from the ballot era, when invalid votes in some constituencies exceeded 2% — sometimes more than the victory margin in closely contested wards.

The stakes are high in what is being dubbed the "Battle for Bengaluru". The BJP currently holds 16 of the city's 28 Assembly seats and all four parliamentary constituencies.

The party has appointed Ram Madhav as incharge for the GBA polls, while the Congress has tasked five ministers with overseeing preparations in each corporation.

Civic issues such as crumbling infrastructure, governance concerns, corruption allegations and hikes in property tax and user fees are expected to dominate the campaign.

For the SEC, the immediate challenge is logistical. State election commissioner G S Sangreshi acknowledged that while ballot papers are legally permissible, the financial and administrative implications are significant. Printing, transportation, secure storage and deployment of counting personnel will entail considerable expenditure. EVMs, though expensive to procure, involve lower recurring costs and faster counting. Officials estimate that the GBA elections could cost around Rs 220 crore and require over 50,000 election staff, with 4-5 personnel per booth across 8,044 polling stations.

The final electoral roll (same as Assembly voter list), will be notified after revision on March 30. The state government must also notify ward reservations before February 22.

The SEC plans to conduct extensive SVEEP (Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation) campaigns and training sessions for officials.

BJP leader and former corporator N R Ramesh said counting paper ballots could significantly delay results.

"EVM results are available within hours. Paper ballots can take 16-18 hours or even days in multi-cornered contests common in civic polls," he said, warning of potential legal hurdles with PILs pending in court against the constitutional validity of the GBA.

On the other hand, Kathyayini Chamaraj, executive trustee of Civic Bangalore, argued that while 100% VVPAT coverage would have been ideal, ballot papers boost voter confidence in the system.

VVPAT slips

"EVMs have lost credibility because VVPAT slips are not provided for every vote cast. VVPAT allows voters to verify if their vote has been recorded properly. The EC also releases only percentage turnout on counting day, not the absolute number of votes polled, which creates mistrust," she said.

Activists contend that paper ballots create a physical record that can be scrutinised during counting and form the basis for legal challenges or demands for re-polling. They also point out that CCTV surveillance, webcasting, central forces deployment and party-appointed booth agents have significantly reduced the risk of large-scale booth capturing.

Supporters of EVMs, however, maintain that the machines eliminate invalid votes, reduce counting time and minimise the scope for manipulation through ballot stuffing or rigging.

Whether the return to ballot papers in India's technology capital strengthens public confidence or complicates electoral management will only become evident once votes are counted — manually.

While those in favour of electronic voting machines say they eliminate invalid votes, reduce counting time and minimise scope for manipulation through ballot stuffing or rigging, those batting for paper votes say they are a physical record that can be scrutinised during counting and form basis for legal challenges or demands for re-polling.

Landowner slips out of sub-registrar office after collecting Rs 99 cr

MANJUNATH SHETTAR
BENGALURU, DHNS

Registration of an enormously valuable property in the city took a dramatic turn when the landowner allegedly walked out of the sub-registrar's office moments after collecting Rs 99 crore in demand drafts and RTGS transfers, leaving the buyer stranded and the sale deed unsigned. However, after the buyers lodged a complaint with the police, the buyer promptly completed the registration process the next day.

According to FIR, the incident occurred on Thursday at the Banashankari Sub-Registrar's office, where a city-based real estate firm had gathered to complete the registration of 3 acres and 36 guntas of land in Dommasandra village, Sarjapur hobli in Anekal.

A senior police officer said that, based on a complaint filed by Gopal Krishna J, CEO of Shrivision Upscale Space Private Ltd, Sadashivanagar police have registered a case and the firm, located on Chowdaiah Road had earlier paid Rs 5 crore in advance to the landowner, Ghanta Narahari, through RTGS in January 2025.

On the day of registration, the company arranged the remaining consideration amount — totalling Rs 99 crore — through multiple demand drafts and bank transfers in the names of parties specified by the landowner. The transaction was to be formalised through execution of conveyance and sale deeds. However, just before the documents were to be signed, Narahari reportedly stepped out of the Sub-Registrar's office and did not return. Attempts to contact him were to no avail, the complaint stated.

Speaking to *DH*, the complainant Gopal Krishna J said, "Soon after a police case was filed, Ghanta Narahari returned and completed the registration on Friday and we took possession of the land immediately. We will soon share a detailed statement with the press."

BJP wants probe into 'letterhead' scam in CMO

BENGALURU, DHNS: BJP general secretary V Sunil Kumar on Saturday demanded an investigation into what he said could be a "letterhead racket" inside Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's office.

Kumar, the Karkala MLA, was reacting to the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) asking the police to investigate what it said was a "fake" letter with Siddaramaiah's letterhead and signature, ordering the transfer of a health officer to the excise department.

"How is the CMO functioning if a letter signed by the chief minister is fake?" Kumar asked.

"Like Siddaramaiah, I'm in public life as well. I'm a responsible lawmaker in the Opposition. I believe the letter, which I shared on social media, to be real, and that it was an example of how this government has derailed," he said.

Kumar asked why Siddaramaiah signed an undated letter. "It won't be surprising if this is a part of a 'letterhead' racket. Who got him to sign it? Did they profit from it? This must be investigated instead of killing the messenger," he said.

On Friday, Siddaramaiah said a viral letter from him ordering the transfer of Mandya district health officer Dr K Mohan as the excise deputy commissioner in Mysuru Rural was "fake" and warned against its spread. "In this era of Photoshop / AI, sharing WhatsApp information without verifying its authenticity is also a crime," he said.

Kumar, however, was not impressed. "Before declaring the letter as fake," he said, "there must be an investigation into the 'letterhead' scam."

Ashoka: Keep Rs 15k cr aside in budget to fight backwardness

BENGALURU, DHNS: Leader of the Opposition R Ashoka on Saturday urged Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to allocate at least Rs 15,000 crore in the upcoming budget to fight regional imbalance and backwardness.

Ashoka said the allocation must be used to implement the recommendations of the M Govinda Rao committee, which submitted its report to Siddaramaiah last month.

The report found backwardness in 177 out of 236 taluks in the state.

Backwardness is "predominantly a north Karnataka phenomenon," the committee said. "The Congress has been in power for the longest period in the state. Siddaramaiah has presented the most budgets. Therefore, they (Congress) are responsible for regional imbalance. Now, appropriate funds should be allocated in the budget to correct that flaw," Ashoka said in a statement.

Ashoka demanded the establishment of a 'Regional Disparity Elimination Monitoring Unit' to oversee the implementation of the Rao committee recommendations.

Centre approves widening Mahabubnagar-Raichur stretch of NH-167

NEW DELHI, DHNS: The Union Cabinet has approved 4-laning of Gudebellur–Mahabubnagar NH-167 in Telangana with investment of Rs 3,175 crore. This will help smooth traffic from Mahabubnagar to Raichur. It is part of Hyderabad-Panaji corridor. The 80-km road covers Mahabubnagar, Narayanpet, Devarkadra, Makthal and Hyderabad in Telangana and Raichur in Karnataka.

No confusion on JD(S) alliance with BJP, says Kumaraswamy

'Talks on next chief minister premature now'

BENGALURU, DHNS

Union Minister for Steel and Heavy Industries H D Kumaraswamy on Saturday said that discussions around who would become the chief minister in the event of a victory for the BJP-JD(S) alliance in the Assembly elections were "premature."

Making it clear that there was no confusion over the regional party's alliance with the saffron party, Kumaraswamy said, "The Assembly elections are still far away. It is not the right time to discuss who should become the chief minister. There is ample time for that. Speaking about it now will be premature."

The union minister said that both the parties would work together to not only strengthen the alliance, but also to bring to power a people-oriented government.

Kumaraswamy

He sought to remind everyone that tentative decisions taken by political parties must not be deemed final.

"There have been no discussions among the two parties about either the local body elections or the polls to the five municipalities under GBA," he added.

The JD(S) is working steadfastly to strengthen its organisation at the grassroots ahead of the upcoming elections, said the former chief minister, while stating that the party's alliance with the BJP was not discussed at Saturday's meeting.

"My objective is to evict the anti-people and corrupt government from power, and usher in people-centric administration. Both the BJP and JD(S) will work together to accomplish this," he added.

Kumaraswamy refused to respond to statements made by BJP leaders on the future of the alliance.

"A few individuals will keep speaking about the alliance and the chief minister's post. If I start responding to each statement, people may think I lack maturity," he added.

Queried about the Bhu Guarantee scheme announced by the Congress government, Kumaraswamy dubbed it a 'land guarantee' scheme for some ministers.

"Everyone is aware of the accusations of land grabbing made against Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda. It is a scheme announced for the benefit of ministers," the former chief minister said.

Techie accused of killing parents performs last rites under security

BENGALURU, DHNS

The last rites of retired navy captain Naveen Chandra Bhat and his wife Dr Shyamala were performed at the Wilson Garden crematorium on Saturday evening by their son Rohan Chandra Bhat, who is accused of killing them, under tight police security.

Rohan (33), a US-return techie currently under treatment at the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (Nimhans), was escorted by personnel from the HAL police station, along with Wilson Garden police, to the crematorium around 5 pm. After the rituals, he was taken back to Nimhans.

A senior police officer said that the court permitted Rohan to perform the last rites after his sister, Rashmi Chandra Bhat, 31, who flew in from the US on Friday, approached a Bengaluru court seeking permission for her brother — the only son in the family — to attend the funeral.

The postmortem examination was conducted in Bowring Hospital before handing over the bodies to the family.

Rohan is accused of fatally stabbing his parents — Naveen Chandra Bhat (60), and Shyamala Bhat (55), a dentist — at their villa in a gated community in Vignan Nagar near HAL on Wednesday. Investigators from HAL police said Rohan will be produced before the court on February 17 and is likely to be remanded in judicial custody, as no further custodial interrogation is required at this stage.

Centre approves 3rd, 4th railway lines between Ballari, Hosapete

NEW DELHI, DHNS: The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved the construction of the third and fourth railway lines between Ballari and Hosapete in Karnataka, at an estimated cost of Rs 2,372 crore.

The project involves laying additional tracks over a route length of 65 km with a corresponding track length of about 149 km, including loops and other infrastructure.

It is part of broader efforts to quadruple capacity on the high-density Vasco da Gama (Goa)–Vijayawada route, which is a critical corridor connecting western and southern India. The lines will pass through Vijayanagara and Ballari districts, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw told media persons on Saturday, adding that the decision was taken in the Union Cabinet held on Friday. The project is expected to be completed in four years.

"This initiative will significantly enhance rail capacity in a mineral-rich and industrial region, including steel hubs with iron ore mining, power plants, and related industries. It will support the introduction of more passenger and freight trains, improve operational efficiency, reduce congestion, and strengthen east-west freight movement while boosting connectivity to Chennai and Mumbai," he said.

The development will also improve access to major tourist destinations in the area, such as Hampi, Ballari Fort, Daroji Sloth Bear Sanctuary, Tungabhadra Dam and Kenchanagudda.

Rajnath to inaugurate H125 helicopter unit in Kolar's Vemgal on February 17

KOLAR, DHNS: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will inaugurate India's first private final assembly line (FAL) for H125 helicopters, set up jointly by Airbus and Tata Advanced Systems Limited (TASL), the aerospace arm of Tata Group, at Vemgal in the district on February 17.

Rajnath Singh

"As per his itinerary, the defence minister will arrive in Bengaluru on February 16, where he will take part in several programmes. On the evening of February 17, Rajnath will visit the TASL site at Vemgal and inaugurate the FAL for H125 helicopters," Kolar MP M Mallesh Babu told *DH*.

The MP said he would hold a site inspection ahead of the minister's visit at Vemgal on Sunday.

The Tata-Airbus helicopter manufacturing unit is coming up on 50 acres of land at Vemgal industrial area.

Karnataka staved off competition from Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, and Uttar Pradesh to bag the deal. The facility is the fourth such unit in the world. The delivery of the first Made in India H125 is expected in the first half of 2027.

New Shakti smart cards to be issued soon: Minister

BENGALURU, DHNS: The state government is set to float tenders for issue of Shakti Scheme smart cards in a month's time.

Speaking to *DH*, Transport Minister Ramalinga Reddy shared that plans have been put in place to bring out smart cards in 4-5 months. "We were waiting for all four corporations to get digital machinery. Now that they are equipped and we have a formal nod from the Cabinet, we will soon put out the tender," he said.

The new card will continue to provide free travel on BMTC buses for eligible women under Shakti scheme, while also serving as a rechargeable stored-value card for Namma Metro services. Users will need to top up the balance to access Metro rides. This will be done by the integration of Shakti scheme ID with National Common Mobility Card system. The move is aimed at curbing misuse linked to Aadhaar-based verification. Conductors will validate trips by swiping the card on electronic ticketing machines.

"This will not only curb Aadhaar misuse but also ensure there are no revenue leakages. It will also help us in better data collection in order to build a more in-depth database based on gender and age," added the minister.

Currently, over 75 lakh women use free buses under the Shakti Scheme every day across the state.

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Amid tech push, big drop in traffic cases tracked by cameras

Traffic police, From Flap

That apart, many parts of the city are also not covered by cameras where cases are either not filed or the police are depending completely on manual intervention.

Meanwhile, pointing out the increasing cases registered through the contact method, the public complained that a high number of police personnel are waiting on city roads to stop vehicles and "harass" commuters.

"You can see two to three traffic police officials waiting to catch people on most of the busy roads. In fact, there are multiple teams at every 2-3 km interval. When such is the situation, there is no doubt that cases will increase. Many of them [commuters] bribe officials and get away, while many others who don't [bribe] will get a challan," said Abhay K, a techie.

BTP officials, on the other hand, maintained that they take up special enforcement drives to track drunk driving, no parking, footpath driving and other offences that can't be traced through cameras and hence, the number of such cases are increasing.

"There are only a few types of violations that the cameras can track. Others have to be checked by personnel on the ground. We have taken up special enforcement drives to check drunk driving cases. Pedestrian safety has also been prioritised and hence, the cases may be high. Also, the entire city is not covered by cameras and manual checking is inevitable in these areas," said Joint Commissioner Karthik Reddy.

He also maintained that all the activities are recorded through body cameras. "Only when there is a visible violation, our officials stop people. All the officials wear body cameras and they cannot stop unnecessarily. Also, all officials are managing traffic during the peak hours and they are involved in enforcement only during non-peak hours," Reddy added.

BJP MPs mute spectators to Centre's injustice to K'taka: CM

Cong providing people-centric governance, says Siddaramaiah

HAVERI, DHNS

Alleging unfair treatment to Karnataka in transfer of funds, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah accused the BJP MPs of not raising their voice in Delhi against the injustice being done to the state.

Speaking at an event to mark the government's 1,000 days in office and distribution of title deeds to one lakh beneficiaries here on Saturday, Siddaramaiah said, "The state is number one in GSDP in the country and the GST collection in the state has soared. This is due to the increased spending power of the people driven by the guarantee schemes. However, we are not getting our rightful share."

"Karnataka contributes Rs 4.5 lakh crore in taxes to the Centre. But in return, we received just Rs 60,000 crore from the Union government. For every Rs 100 of tax paid to the Centre, we are getting approximately Rs 13 to Rs 14. The Centre had announced a grant of Rs 5,300 crore for Upper Bhadra in its budget three years ago, but we haven't received a single paisa.

The Centre has not released Rs 11,495 crore under 15th Finance Commission. Under the Jal Jeevan Mission, Rs 15,000 crore is yet to be released," he said and added that BJP MPs from the state Basavaraj Bommai, Pralhad Joshi and Jagadish Shettar are not even speaking in Delhi against the injustice being done to the state.

"The previous BJP government had not cleared pending dues worth Rs 75,000 crore to the contractors. The BJP government had called tenders for works worth Rs 2.75 lakh crore. Amidst all this crisis, our government has spent Rs 1.18 lakh crore to implement five guarantee schemes and fulfil 273 of the 590 promises made in our manifesto. We are making sincere efforts to fulfill the remaining promises," the chief minister said.

"Our government has successfully completed 1,000 days in office during which we came up with welfare measures for the Dalits, backward classes, minorities and women. Only the Congress government walks the talk," Siddaramaiah reiterated.

The chief minister said, "Today one lakh title deeds have been distributed to beneficiaries. This is the second such drive by the Revenue department. So far, 2.20 lakh beneficiaries have received title deeds. The remaining people will soon get the title deeds."

Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar, Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda, ministers Shivanand Patil, H K Patil, G Parameshwara, Satish Jarkiholi, K H Muniyappa, M B Patil K J George, legislators and the officials were present.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar hand over title deeds to beneficiaries at 'Land Guarantee' convention, in Haveri on Saturday.

Let the high command decide: Siddu

"Don't ask me again and again, let the high command decide", Chief Minister Siddaramaiah told reporters when asked about the alleged power-sharing deal.

"I have told you that I will not react nor make any statement on the issue. But you keep asking me about the leadership change repeatedly", Siddaramaiah fumed at the reporters on the sidelines of Haveri convention.

When asked about D K Shivakumar's tweet: "hard work will always pay," Siddaramaiah shot back, "Has the high command tweeted?".

Central funds misused by Cong govt in K'taka: Vijayendra

Says Congress celebrating 1,000 days in office by spreading 1,000 lies

BENGALURU, DHNS

The BJP on Saturday alleged that the Siddaramaiah-led government had misused central grants, diverting Rs 1,323.96 crore released under special assistance to the state for capital investment (2025-26) to other purposes.

Addressing a news conference, BJP state president B Y Vijayendra said, "The central grants are meant for specific schemes and are released stage-wise upon submission of progress reports and utilisation certificates (UCs). However, the state government has not disbursed funds for minor irrigation (for Krishna Bhagya Jala Nigam Ltd and Karnataka Neeravari Nigam Limited). The Finance Department has withheld amounts and pressured the department to submit fabricated UCs to secure subsequent installments."

Vijayendra referred documents (dated July 1, 2025) on the loan-cum-interest-free special assistance for minor irrigation projects and demanded a response from the chief minister - also the Finance minister - on the alleged fake UCs.

Citing the Valmiki Corporation scam, Vijayendra said diversion of crores of funds to Telangana through multiple bank accounts was not possible without the consent of the chief minister. He also sought "clarity" on the fate of Rs 5,000 crore earmarked for the Gruha Lakshmi scheme.

Alleging that the Ahinda leader Siddaramaiah had done little for the development of the backward classes, Vijayendra said, "The funding for caste-based development corporations especially of the backward classes and Ahinda communities has been drastically reduced by the Siddaramaiah government. The Congress is only using the Ahinda communities as its votebank."

Flagging pending payments of Rs 65 crore under Anugraha Yojana (financial relief to shepherds on the death of sheep or goats), he said, "CM belonging to the 'Halumata' (shepherd) has helped the community little. I demand allocation of Rs 1,000 crore for the Ahinda communities in the upcoming state Budget."

Slamming the Congress government for celebrating 1,000 days in office, Vijayendra accused the government of betraying the poor, farmers, women and youth while indulging in "thousand lies" to mark the milestone.

"Congress had failed to fill 2.85 lakh vacant government posts, implement the Old Pension Scheme for employees recruited after 2006, enhance honorariums of anganwadi, ASHA and midday meal workers, and provide hostel facilities to 1.41 lakh backward class students," said Vijayendra who also questioned how the government justified the expenditure of Rs 170 crore and Rs 450 crore on caste surveys.

Over 4.8 lakh kids in state...

Stunt, From Page 3

The minister informed that children's height and weight will be monitored every month at registered Anganawadi centres. Hebbalkar said in her reply that the government is taking measures to re-measure the height and weight of the children to verify the root causes for stunting.

Speaking to *DH*, MLC Hemalatha Nayak opined that there is a need to improve the quality and taste of food supplied at Anganawadi centres.

"I have even brought to the notice of the minister the poor quality jaggery supplied. Children at anganawadis don't like the taste of the Pushti food powder. We have seen children throwing the food into bins," she added.

"Pregnant women should be cared for from day one, especially in North Karnataka districts. Due to severe poverty, women and their families cannot afford nutritious food during pregnancy. This is one of the major reasons for stunting among children," she said.

Meanwhile, nutritionists say that the initial six years are critical for general growth and brain development of children.

"When children don't get enough protein, iron, zinc, healthy fats and essential vitamins, their growth slows down to conserve energy," Rajeshwari R Hanchinal, a leading nutritionist in Bengaluru.

Rajeshwari says this leads to stunting (low height for age). "Stunting doesn't just affect the height, it impacts immunity, learning ability and future productivity. According to the World Health Organisation, early childhood undernutrition has lifelong consequences. Balancing diverse meals in early years can protect growth, strengthen immunity and build a healthier, brighter future," adds Rajeshwari.

DECKING UP SKYSCAPE

Kites float in the sky as part of Hampi Utsav at the district stadium at Hosapete in Vijayanagar district on Saturday. DH PHOTO

Suryakumar, Salman dodge...

Handshake, From Flap

"We shall find out tomorrow," he gushed.

When prodded by another journalist, a relaxed Suryakumar stuck to the same script. "I will break the suspense tomorrow. I just told him to wait for 24 hours. We will play a good game. What is important now? Isn't the game important tomorrow? You will see at the toss. Wait for 24 hours."

Salman yet again stressed that sports and politics should not be mixed and the 'Spirit of the Game' must be upheld at any cost, wishing cricketers from both sides were able to bond again like old times. "Cricket should be played in the right spirit. My personal opinion may not matter. But cricket should be played according to how it has always been meant to be played. It's up to them to decide what to do."

Suryakumar's gesture during the Asia Cup, held in the shadow of the Pahalgam terror attack, set off a chain of unsavoury incidents that climaxed with the Indians refusing to take the trophy from the Asian Cricket Council President Mohsin Naqvi and the peeved Pakistan Interior Minister in retaliation locking up the cup in his office.

'Waiting for govt funds, contractors have mortgaged their houses'

SHIVAMOGGA, DHNS

From delayed payment to rising cost of construction materials, contractors have been facing a host of problems plunging them in to financial distress, said the president of Karnataka State Contractors Association R Manjunath in Shivamogga on Saturday.

Manjunath was participating in a preliminary meeting convened by the Malenadu Contractors Association ahead of the demonstration planned at Freedom Park in Bengaluru on March 5. He lamented the failure on the chief minister's part to convene an official meeting of the office-bearers of the Karnataka State Contractors Association, ministers and department secretaries for the past two-and-a-half years.

"The meeting was scheduled two to three times but was postponed without any reason," said Manjunath.

Delay on the part of the government in settling pending bills – some bills have been unpaid for years on end – has put medium and small contractors under immense pressure. "Increase in interests on bank loans has compounded our woes. Many contractors have had to mortgage their houses, properties and jewellery as they wait for money from the government," rued Manjunath.

Centre's Rs 1L-cr boost for urban transformation

UCF, From Page 3

The remaining 25% will come from states, Union Territories, urban local bodies (ULBs), or additional market borrowings.

With the Centre's 1 lakh crore contribution, the initiative is expected to unlock around 4 lakh crore in total investment in urban areas over the next five years.

Through the UCF, the government expects to "catalyse large-scale private investments" and aims to build resilient, inclusive and climate-responsive cities.

It gives effect to proposals announced in the Union Budget 2025-26, including 'Cities as Growth Hubs'.

Projects under the UCF will be selected through a competitive "challenge-mode" mechanism, based on readiness, bankability and clear outcome indicators.

Funding is linked to reforms in urban governance, municipal finance, digital services, project monitoring and integrated land use-mobility planning.

The fund will be operational from FY 2025-26 to FY 2030-31, with an extendable implementation period up to FY 2033-34.

While state governments and ULBs will have administrative control of these projects, ensuring municipal bodies retain responsibility, technology providers and industry players will participate in execution.

Vaishnaw emphasised that extensive consultations with states were held over the past year to finalise the framework, highlighting the important role of states in implementation.

Eligible cities include: All state and Union Territory capitals, cities with a population of 10 lakh or more, major industrial cities with 1 lakh or more population, special focus on Tier-II and Tier-III cities, as well as those in the Northeast and hilly states.

However, projects already funded under schemes such as AMRUT 2.0 or Swachh Bharat Mission 2.0 will not be eligible. The UCF will synergise with the Smart Cities Mission, which is nearing completion.

Key project areas include infrastructure retrofitting and creative redevelopment, improvement of urban mobility, rejuvenation of central business districts and heritage cores, development of greenfield and semi-greenfield areas, upgradation of water supply and sanitation, and focus on cleanliness and solid waste management.

To support smaller cities, especially in the Northeast and hilly regions, and those accessing market finance for the first time, the Cabinet also approved a 5,000-crore credit repayment guarantee corpus. For initial loans, the Union government will guarantee up to 7 crore or 70% of the loan amount (whichever is lower), enabling projects of around 20 crore initially and up to 28 crore in subsequent rounds.

Dad approaches...

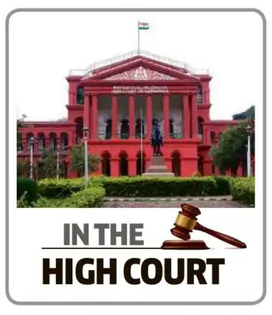
US student, From Page 3

In his appeal, Sreenivasaiah requested the authorities to coordinate with the Embassy of India in the US. "We earnestly request the Embassy of India to extend its valuable support and assistance by coordinating with the concerned authorities to help locate our son," the letter said.

Acting on the representation, Shalini Rajneesh, Karnataka Chief Secretary, has written to the Ministry of External Affairs, urging its immediate intervention. She requested the MEA to direct the Consulate General of India in San Francisco to extend necessary assistance, including close coordination with local law enforcement agencies in California and regular updates to the family. Officials said the state government is closely monitoring the matter and is in touch with Central authorities. Saketh's parents are both working professionals and he had called his mother a few minutes before he went missing. Since she was busy, she did not see the call. When she later called him, the phone remained switched off.

Pay higher relief to man injured in accident: HC to bike owner

BENGALURU, DHNS:



The high court has directed the owner of an implicated motorcycle to pay enhanced compensation to a stenographer injured in an accident in 2009.

The court passed this order while exonerating the insurance company from the liability of payment of compensation after noticing that it was a clear case of implication of another vehicle having insurance.

The accident victim is J Subramanya, a stenographer in the office of director, Karnataka engineering research station at K R Sagar in Srirangapatna.

The accident had occurred when a motorcycle collided with the two-wheeler on which Subramanya was riding pillion.

The initial complaint was filed on August 31, 2009, with details of one motorcycle, while a second complaint was filed on September 6, with details of another motorcycle and a different person as the rider.

On August 24, 2013, the tribunal at Pandavapura awarded Rs 79,850 with interest at 6% per annum.

The insurance company challenged this order, alleging fraud played by the claimant. On the other hand, claimant Subramanya sought higher compensation.

After perusing the material, Justice Sree Sudha said facts clearly showed that though the claimant had met with an accident, there is implication of another vehicle which is having insurance to gain wrongfully.

"It is a clear case of implication of another vehicle which is having insurance to gain wrongfully, done in collusion with the owner of the vehicle i.e., one S N Raghavendra. Therefore, this court finds it reasonable to exonerate the insurance company from paying the liability and only the owner of the vehicle is liable to pay the compensation," the court said.

The court ordered Rs 2,63,021 compensation along with interest at 6% per annum, which shall be paid entirely by owner of the implicated vehicle, i.e., Raghavendra.

◆ WEATHER ◆

Overview: Dry weather prevailed over Coastal Karnataka, South Interior Karnataka and North Interior Karnataka

Forecast Feb 15: Dry weather likely to prevail over the state.

INTERIOR NORTH			
Stations	Max	Min	Rain
Belagavi	31.2	16.2	00
Bidar	31	13.4	00
Vijayapura	31.5	13	00
Dharwad	31.6	12.6	00
Haveri	32.2	13.4	00
Kalaburagi	34.4	18.2	00
Raichur	32.4	16.4	00
COASTAL			
Honnavar	35.6	17.9	00
Karwar	37.4	18.8	00
Shirali	NA	NA	NA
Mangaluru	34	23	00

INTERIOR SOUTH			
Stations	Max	Min	Rain
Agumbe	NA	NA	NA
Bengaluru	31	16.3	0C
Ballari	34.7	19.6	0C
Chamarajanagar	NA	NA	NA
Chikkamagaluru	NA	NA	NA
Chitradurga	31.4	16	0C
Davangere	31.5	12	0C
Hassan	31.2	12.1	0C
Mysuru	32	15.6	0C
Madikeri	NA	NA	NA
Kolar	31	11.8	0C
OTHER STATIONS			
New Delhi	26.3	9.2	0C
Kolkata	28.4	15	0C
Mumbai	32.6	19.9	0C
Chennai	31.9	22.3	0C
Pune	32	14	0C
Hyderabad	30.9	17.5	0C
Th'puram	34.3	23.8	0C

Experts weigh in on safety structure of dams, rehab of old dams

BENGALURU, DHNS: The international dam conference on Saturday held at Indian Institute of Science witnessed experts from across the world discussing the safety structure of dams, rehabilitation of old dams and its implications.

J Chandrashekar Iyer, former chairman of the Central Water Commission (CWC), spoke about the compatibility of the dams in the context of rehabilitation.

"Ensuring compatibility aims at a scientific and engineering harmony between the existing substrate, structure, environment and the proposed external rehabilitation interventions to ensure the dam remains safe for the long haul," he said.

He explained that modernisation must be intrinsic to the rehabilitation measures undertaken in older dams to the extent technically feasible, without adversely affecting the integrity and stability of the dam.

On the importance of baseline information before rehabilitation of the dams, Iyer said, "While many of the dam owners follow the best practice of maintaining a digital repository of all dam documents, there are many others with only scanty information. All original designs and drawings are not traceable. This includes those of many of the older dams".

"Unscientific and incompatible recommendations in the absence of adequate baseline information may not necessarily serve the desired long-term operational safety," he added.

On the rehabilitation of Krishna Raja Sagar (KRS) dam, built under patronage of Nalwadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar and guidance of Sir M Visvesvaraya, Kishore Kumar, assistant executive engineer, Cauvery Neeravari Nigam Limited, said, "We recently replaced 136 gates of the KRS dam. We had a different team of experts to make the rehabilitation smoother".

"KRS is a 90-year-old dam. The 136 gates were casting metal gates, there was erosion of the casting and some of the gates were not closing all the way. The skill plate of the gate was completely eroded," he said.

"Apart from gates, we also replaced and erected sill beam, provided provision of individual drum hoist for each gate, provision of side guide and refurbishment of track wheel track," he said, about works undertaken at KRS.

BEYOND COMEDY

Considered mercurial, will he join the BJP for an electoral return?

Will Sidhu have the last political laugh?

GAUTAM DHEER

Behind the incessantly chortling image of Navjot Singh Sidhu in the realm of comedy on Kapil Sharma's popular show is someone at the crossroads of a volatile political career. Sidhu has, for years now, remained frustratingly marginalised within the Congress — a party he served as the state president until the 2022 Assembly polls.

Punjab goes to the polls in less than a year, and is poised to witness a political churn in the run-up.

Sidhu's namesake wife Navjot Kaur Sidhu, a medical doctor by profession and a former MLA, vexed Congressmen straight up to the central leadership when she recently denounced Rahul Gandhi as "Pappu" and dropped the "Rs 500-crore-suitcase" remark, suggesting that it was a "pre-qualification to become a Congress chief minister". What followed was no surprise: AICC general secretary and the party's Punjab in-charge Bhupesh Baghel was quick to announce her expulsion.

But what Kaur said against the Gandhis or the Congress was perhaps not a remark out of naivety. It was the scaffolding of a possible political reset for the Sidhu couple. After all, Navjot Singh Sidhu has been yearning to come out of political hibernation.

Before he joined the Congress, Sidhu was a BJP MP. His response to his wife's "Pappu" jibe at Rahul has been guarded. After all, he has been trying to test the waters, but is unwilling to burn his bridges with the Congress.

Navjot Singh Sidhu has, for years now, remained frustratingly marginalised within the Congress – a party he served as the state president until the 2022 Assembly polls.. PTI FILE

Regardless of his mass urban appeal as a Jat Sikh, his awe-inspiring oratory, combative swagger, and relatively clean political image, Navjot Singh Sidhu remains an unutilised asset. He is widely seen as an unpredictable politician. That notwithstanding, his assets outweigh his weaknesses and leaders from both the BJP and the Congress subtly acknowledge his ability to turn tides.

Next stop: BJP?

Sidhu's BJP entry, given his expendability within the Congress, is a more intricate proposition than it appears.

On one hand, Punjab Congress leaders say "no tears will be shed" if the Sidhu couple leaves the party. Sidhu wouldn't have settled for anything less than being announced as the party's chief-ministerial face in the run-up to the elections.

However, he also knows that he would have to navigate a minefield of detractors for his dreams to come true. Punjab's Congress unit has too many aspirants for the coveted post, who are keeping the ammunition dry to stonewall any attempt to rehabilitate Sidhu.

On the other hand, this year is crucial for the BJP in Punjab. The saffron outfit now no longer walks with the crutches of its former alliance partner, the Shiromani Akali Dal (Badal): They severed ties over the now-repealed farm laws. Whether they rejoin hands is another story, but the fact remains that the BJP has a limited electoral outreach, given that it contested only 23 of the 117 Assembly seats in Punjab as an ally of the SAD.

Sidhu, however, has some other challenges ahead. Consider this: Former two-term Congress CM Capt Amarinder Singh is now in the BJP, having been unceremoniously removed as the chief minister ahead of the 2022 Assembly polls. He is again flexing his muscles at 83 years of age.

Sidhu was a Cabinet minister when Amarinder was the CM. They had a strained relationship, and Sidhu, then close to Priyanka and Rahul Gandhi, presumably played a part in Amarinder's ouster. Sidhu will have to navigate this, while the BJP will have to see beyond personal acrimony if it has to even project itself as an option in this border state.

Meanwhile, a lot is being made of the recent Enforcement Directorate (ED) summons to Amarinder and his son Raninder Singh in an old FEMA case. Amarinder, recuperating from a knee-replacement surgery at a multispecialty hospital near here, did not appear before the Enforcement Directorate , citing health reasons. And then, days after the summons were issued, the seniormost ED officer in Jalandhar was transferred to Chennai.

As for a possible SAD-BJP reunion, Sidhu's presence in the saffron party might queer the pitch again. Sidhu, as a member of the treasury benches, was extremely vocal against SAD strongman and former Cabinet minister Bikram Singh Majithia, who is SAD chief Sukhbir Badal's brother-in-law, both inside and outside the Assembly. Both Majithia and Sidhu have stakes in Amritsar (East), from where they unsuccessfully contested the last assembly polls in 2022 against each other. The AAP candidate won the seat.

(The writer is Chandigarh-based senior jounalist)

Oppn mulls CEC removal ahead of elections

SHEMIN JOY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar

Looking to step up pressure on the ruling BJP and clear the internal strains ahead of Assembly polls in April-May, the Opposition is exploring the possibility of submitting a notice seeking the removal of Gyanesh Kumar as Chief Election Commissioner over the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls.

No decision has yet been taken on moving a notice against Kumar. The move comes close on the heels of a similar exercise targeting Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, whom the Opposition had accused of being "blatantly partisan" towards Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi and other MPs.

In both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, the government is comfortably placed, with numbers stacked against the Opposition. During the Bihar SIR in August last year, Opposition parties had indicated they were planning to submit a notice against Kumar in the Monsoon Session 2025, but did not move forward.

If submitted, the notice is likely to be taken up only in the second phase of the Budget Session starting March 9. One of the hurdles the Opposition may face is the mandatory 14-day notice period, which could coincide with election campaigning in poll-bound states.

While the Trinamool Congress was keen on moving against Kumar during the first phase of the Budget Session, with West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee backing such an initiative, the Congress and other parties instead filed a notice seeking Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla's removal.

The Trinamool did not sign the notice, as it felt that the Congress was pushing its agenda and did not bother to take them on board. The party extended a qualified support for action against Birla, insisting that they should have first approached him for withdrawal of suspension of MPs and see his reaction.

Opposition sources said parties are now actively considering moving against Kumar just ahead of the elections, arguing that such a step could send a message to voters while putting pressure on the Election Commission to remain impartial. The move may also help in assuaging the concerns of Trinamool, they added.

With the government facing criticism over the India-US trade deal, controversy surrounding the Epstein files and issues linked to the unpublished memoir of Gen MM Naravane, the Opposition is seeking to sharpen its narrative against the ruling BJP.

The Trinamool Congress has been up in arms against the EC over the SIR in West Bengal, with Mamata herself appearing before the Supreme Court to argue the case. Several regional parties are also in favour of taking a strong stand against the CEC.

Sources said the Samajwadi Party is also internally discussing its next course of action once the final electoral roll in Uttar Pradesh is published in April. They point out that there is a gap of around 4.5 crore voters between the rolls prepared for local body polls and SIR draft rolls.

Nod for India's first underwater tunnel

Rs 18,662-cr Assam project to boost NE connectivity, logistics

AJITH ATHRADY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved India's first underwater road-cum-rail tunnel project in Assam at a total capital cost of Rs 18,662 crore.

The project involves constructing a four-lane access-controlled greenfield corridor connecting Gohpur on NH-15 to Numaligarh on NH-715. This includes a 15.79 km twin-tube road-cum-rail tunnel beneath the Brahmaputra River, making the total project length approximately 33.7 km.

It will be developed on the Engineering, Procurement, and Construction (EPC) model by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH).

Currently, the route between Numaligarh (on NH-715) and Gohpur (on NH-15) spans around 240 km, taking about 6 hours via the existing Kaliabhambhora road bridge near Silghat on NH-52. This path passes through areas including Kaziranga National Park and Biswanath Town.

The new corridor will drastically reduce travel distance to roughly 34 km and travel time to about 20 minutes, offering seamless and efficient connectivity. This will be India's first underwater road-cum-rail tunnel and the second of its kind in the world.

The twin-tube design (with two lanes each for road traffic and provision for railway infrastructure in one tube) will enhance multi-modal integration by linking to railway lines, tourist destinations, airports, and inland waterways.

The initiative will benefit Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, and other northeastern states by improving freight movement, lowering logistics costs, boosting socio-economic growth, and strengthening strategic connectivity under India's Act East Policy.

The CCEA has also cleared road projects worth over Rs 11,000 crore in Maharashtra, Telangana, and Gujarat, including the rehabilitation and upgradation of the Ghoti-Trimbak (Mokhada)-Jawhar-Manor-Palghar section of NH-160A in Maharashtra at Rs 3,320.38 crore.

Additionally, the Cabinet approved three railway projects costing approximately Rs 18,509 crore, involving the construction of third and fourth lines between Kasara-Manmad, Delhi-Ambala, and Ballari-Hosapete.

BIG INFRA PUSH

- The project entails a four-lane corridor from Gohpur to Numaligarh.
- It will feature a 15.79 km twin-tube tunnel under the Brahmaputra, totalling about 33.7 km.
- The project to be developed at Rs 18,662 crore will be the second such tunnel in the world.
- It will cut travel distance from 240 km to roughly 34 km and travel time from around 6 hours to 20 minutes.
- Assam, Arunachal, Nagaland, and other north-eastern states to benefit.

Centre rolls out phase II of startup fund with Rs 10,000-cr outlay

The Union Cabinet has approved the second tranche of the Startup India Fund of Funds Scheme with a corpus of Rs 10,000 crore.

The key focus would be on deep-tech startups, early-growth-stage startups through smaller funds, tech-driven, innovative manufacturing startups, and sector- and stage-agnostic startups, Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said.

There will be operational flexibilities, including higher government contribution in AIFs (alternative investment funds) funding deep tech and high-tech manufacturing, the minister said.

The fund will encourage the long-term investing culture and patient capital.

The government in 2016 had constituted a Fund of Funds worth Rs 10,000 crore to provide seed capital and enable startups to take calculated risks.

Following the successful utilisation of the first tranche, a second phase of Rs 10,000 crore was sanctioned in the Union Budget for 2025-26.

Congress has become more poisonous now: Modi in Assam

SUMIR KARMAKAR
GUWAHATI, DHNS

Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the inauguration of development projects, in Guwahati. Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma and Governor Lakshman Acharya are seen. PTI

Out of power for over 10 years, the Congress has become more poisonous now, said Prime Minister Narendra Modi in poll-bound Assam on Saturday.

"The Congress kept Assam disturbed by pushing the state into bandhs, violence, and conflict. More than 1,000 people used to die in Assam every year, and the Congress was responsible. Now, many youths have given up weapons and joined the constitutional path and the process of peace and development," he told the BJP's booth-level workers at Khanapara in Guwahati.

"As the Congress has been out of power for more than 10 years now, it has become more poisonous. It wants to push Assam into tensions again. It wants to hand over the state to infiltrators. Its leaders in Delhi and here are also trying to protect the ghuspetias (infiltrators)," said the prime minister.

He also urged the booth-level workers to ensure the BJP's victory for the third time in a row in Assam.

He said the party was trying to provide a solution to the problems which the state faced due to the Congress.

"During the Congress' time, Assam's share from Central taxes was only Rs 10,000 crore. This has gone up to Rs 50,000 crore now. Assam got Rs 5.5 lakh crore in the budget. Can the Congress, which was reluctant to pay, work for Assam's development?" he asked.

"Roads and highways have been revamped, five new bridges constructed over the river Brahmaputra, new airports set up... Seeing all these, Congress leaders have lost their sleep. So, they are trying to create trouble by siding with those who want to divide the nation and the Northeast... So, people of Assam need to be alert to the Congress," he said.

Emergency landing facility

Earlier in the day, Modi unveiled an Emergency Landing Facility (ELF) by landing on a highway at Sonari in Assam's Dibrugarh district. A Herculus C130J aircraft of the IAF, with Modi on board, landed on the ELF.

Modi also inaugurated a six-lane new bridge over the Brahmaputra connecting Guwahati with North Guwahati, a National Data Centre for the North Eastern Region at Amingaon in the Kamrup district, and an IIM at Guwahati, and also flagged off 225 electric buses under the PM-eBus Sewa Scheme in Guwahati (100), Nagpur (50), Bhavnagar (50), and Chandigarh (25).

NR Congress to continue alliance with BJP in Puducherry

CHENNAI, DHNS: Puducherry Chief Minister N Rangaswamy on Saturday announced that the N R Congress-BJP alliance, which was stitched together in 2021, will continue for the 2026 Assembly polls on a day Union Home Minister Amit Shah appealed to the people of the Union Territory to give the NDA government "another chance."

"N R Congress' alliance with the BJP continues. We will fight the polls together. We will discuss the modalities of the alliance in due course," Rangaswamy told reporters after meeting Shah in Karaikal.

The announcement puts an end to speculation that Rangaswamy was mulling leaving the NDA and fighting the polls along with Tamilaga Vetri Kazhagam led by actor-politician Vijay, who commands a huge fan following in the UT as well.

Sources told *DH* that Rangasamy told Shah that the alliance will continue and that leaders of both parties will sit together and conclude seat-sharing talks at the earliest.

Indian Navy airlifts Japanese sailor in medical emergency

S N V SUDHIR
HYDERABAD, DHNS

In a swift emergency response, an Indian Navy crew evacuated a Japanese sailor from a Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) ship approximately 200 km off the Visakhapatnam coast on Saturday.

"Responding swiftly as a first responder and trusted global security partner, Indian Navy launched a Sea King helicopter on Feb 14 to evacuate a critically ill Japanese sailor from a JMSDF ship 200 km from Visakhapatnam," said an Indian Navy spokesperson.

"The patient was safely airlifted to the Indian Navy's Eastern Naval Command (ENC) headquarters at INS Dega and shifted to Naval Hospital Kalyani for medical aid. The medical evacuation operation reflects strong international maritime cooperation between India and Japan," said the spokesperson.

Sources in the Indian Navy indicated that the JMSDF ship is en route to the Vizag coast to participate in the International Fleet Review (IFR) scheduled for February 18, as well as the 13th edition of MILAN—Indian Navy's flagship multilateral naval exercise—from Feb 18 to 25 at Visakhapatnam and in the waters of the Bay of Bengal.

WELFARE DRIVE

PM RAHAT promises instant hospital care for accident victims

NEW DELHI, DHNS

The Centre has approved the PM RAHAT (Road Accident Victim Hospitalisation and Assured Treatment) Scheme, a policy initiative aimed at ensuring that road accident victims receive immediate hospital care regardless of their ability to pay.

Under the scheme, eligible victims in any category of road are entitled to cashless treatment of up to Rs 1.5 lakh for seven days from the date of the accident.

This was the first decision taken by Prime Minister Narendra Modi after shifting the Prime Minister's Office to Seva Teerth from South Block, said a statement from the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways.

Stabilisation treatment will be provided for up to 24 hours in non-life-threatening cases and up to 48 hours in life-threatening cases, subject to police authentication on an integrated digital system.

PM RAHAT is implemented through a robust, technology-driven framework amalgamating the Electronic Detailed Accident Report (eDAR) platform of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways with the Transaction Management System (TMS 2.0) of the National Health Authority.

Together, these systems are intended to manage the flow of information from the moment an accident is reported through to hospital admission, treatment, claim submission, and payment.

Reimbursements to hospitals are routed through the Motor Vehicle Accident Fund.

Integration with the Emergency Response Support System 112 helpline ensures that accident victims reach hospitals within Golden Hour.

Top court judge cautions against excessive reliance on tech

NEW DELHI, DHNS: Supreme Court judge Justice Rajesh Bindal cautioned against excessive reliance on technology, saying it has led to reduced attention spans among law students and a tendency to depend blindly on readily available information without critical analysis.

He stressed that technology should serve as a tool, not a substitute for independent thinking and thorough reading. In this context, he underlined the crucial role of teachers in providing proper guidance and fostering analytical skills.

Speaking at the 22nd K K Luthra Memorial Moot Court Competition at Delhi University's Campus Law Centre, he highlighted the rapid evolution of technology, particularly in recent years with the advent of artificial intelligence, which has taken technological development in an entirely new direction.

He pointed out that in comparison to other countries, Indian courts have adapted to technological advancements more effectively.

Justice Bindal explained that Indian courts now routinely use live streaming, virtual courts, digital courts, e-libraries, and e-filing systems, making the justice delivery system more accessible and convenient for both litigators and citizens.

Madras HC orders probe into bribe allegations for favourable order

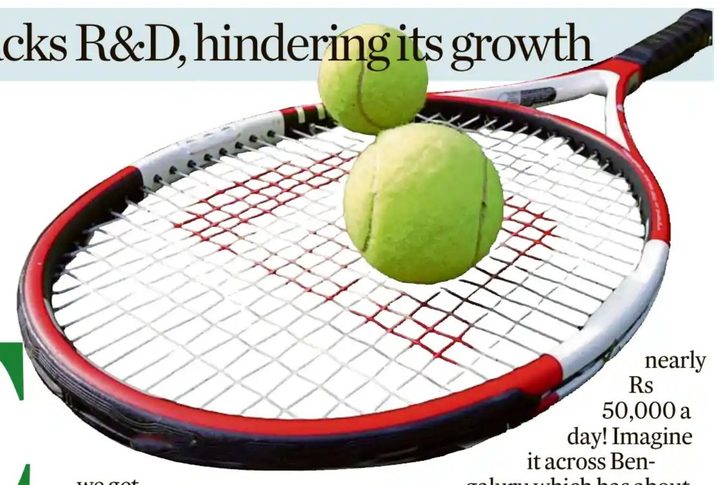
NEW DELHI, DHNS: The Madras High Court has referred to its vigilance cell an allegation that a senior counsel collected Rs 50 lakh from the client to pay it to the judge concerned to pass a favourable order in a criminal case.

Justice M Nirmal Kumar, upon the receipt of a communication from the Ministry of Law and Justice on behalf of All India Lawyers' Association for Justice (AILAJ), recused to hear the criminal petitions filed by N Ganesh Agrawal and Naresh Prasad Agarwal in respect of proceedings pending before the Special Judge for CBI Cases at Chennai.

CATCHING UP

Without govt sops & investments, India's sports goods production lacks R&D, hindering its growth

Sitting on a GOLD MINE



MADHU JAWALI
BENGALURU, DHNS

Ever wondered why enterprises in Jalandhar (Punjab) and Meerut (Uttar Pradesh) together account for 75-80% of India's sports goods manufacturing? It's an interesting tale rooted in India's partition. Sialkot in Pakistan used to be a major sports equipment manufacturing hub where Sports Goods Manufacturing Industry in India was established on 13th April, 1883. Post 1947, when India was divided into two nations, many of Sialkot's skilled Hindu craftsmen crossed the border with some settling in Jalandhar and others in Meerut. With skill sets available, the entrepreneurs then set up their industries in these two towns, paving the way for the present Indian Sports Goods Industry (ISGI) in 1948.

The sports goods industry in India has witnessed phenomenal growth over the past six decades and now occupies a place of prominence in the Indian economy in view of its massive potential for employment, growth and export. But, despite its century-old legacy in the field, sport equipment manufacturing is something that India hasn't tapped its full potential -- both in domestic and international markets.

The Indian sports goods sector is valued at USD 4.88 billion (42,877 crore) in 2024 and is projected to grow to USD 6.6 billion (57,800 crore) by 2027 and 87,300 crore by 2034. The sector provides employment to over five lakh people, primarily in MSME clusters in Meerut, Jalandhar, Ludhiana and Delhi-NCR. India is the third largest sports goods manufacturer in Asia and the 21st largest exporter globally, with exports worth USD 523 million in 2023–24 to more than 90 countries. Major export destinations include the USA, UK, Australia, Germany and France, with opportunities expanding in South Africa, UAE, Canada and Sweden.

Notwithstanding the fact that India is the fastest growing market -- expected to grow at a CAGR of 9.1% from 2026 to 2033 -- its share globally isn't much to shout home about.

ISGI in one of its reports, observes that outdated technology, lack of standards and quality of the products, shortage of some of the raw materials and skilled labour has hampered the industry that has the potential to generate unimaginable wealth and lakhs of jobs.

After years of slumber, there is a tangible effort, including the government, now to leverage India's potential to become a sports goods manufacturing behemoth. The latest Union government budget has dedicated incentives for sports goods manufacturing, innovation, research and development. These measures are intended to help reduce dependence on imports, enable competitive pricing and encourage leading sports equipment enterprises to invest in greater innovation across their product range. However, an allocation of Rs 500 crore for innovation and manufacturing is just a drop in the ocean.

THE MAJOR PRODUCTS BY INDIA

- Inflatable balls which include football, rugby ball, basketball etc
- Wood-based equipment comprising of cricket bat, hockey stick, carrom board, chess board etc
- Protective equipment for cricket, hockey, rugby such as gloves, shin guards, chest guards etc
- Racquets, shuttlecocks etc

India's sports equipment has been growing at a rapid speed and is only going to get bigger in a more rapid manner as rising health consciousness, growing disposable income, proliferation of E-commerce platforms, among others, contribute to the expansion of the market.

Former badminton international and renowned coach U Vimal Kumar is at pains to explain India's lackadaisical approach when it comes to producing sports equipment.

"I think it is not that we don't have the know-how, it is the question of the quality -- the manufacturing. Earlier we used to say the Chinese products were crap, it is substandard. But over the years now, if you look at it, the Chinese products are excellent.

"When I travel to China, I sometimes see the Chinese exclusive, their products, the places where they take you, they are more expensive sometimes than these Western products. So why can't we do that? Especially when there is a huge market. Again, it's the mindset. We produce inferior stuff. We can easily do a much better job; we can come out with better R&D and we can invest there but we have a long way to go," he told *DHoS*.

Former India player Jatin Paranjape, who worked with Nike as its Head of Sports Marketing and Cricket Category Head, sees a massive role for India in sports goods.

"If you see the current players, like Amazon with their sports category, Flipkart, Decathlon, Puma, Skechers, I'm narrating these in order of sizes of business starting with Amazon," he said. "All these e-commerce brands and the sports brands which I mentioned are all sourcing their equipment and when I say equipment, I also mean footwear. So, let's clarify on that because footwear is the elephant in the room and all these brands are sourced from China, Vietnam, everywhere else but India. So, if we get the right innovation going at the Indian sports equipment manufacturing level, innovation and R&D going, I think the opportunity is absolutely enormous."

Vimal points out to the shuttlecock business and how much India is losing out on due sub-standards qualities of the product.

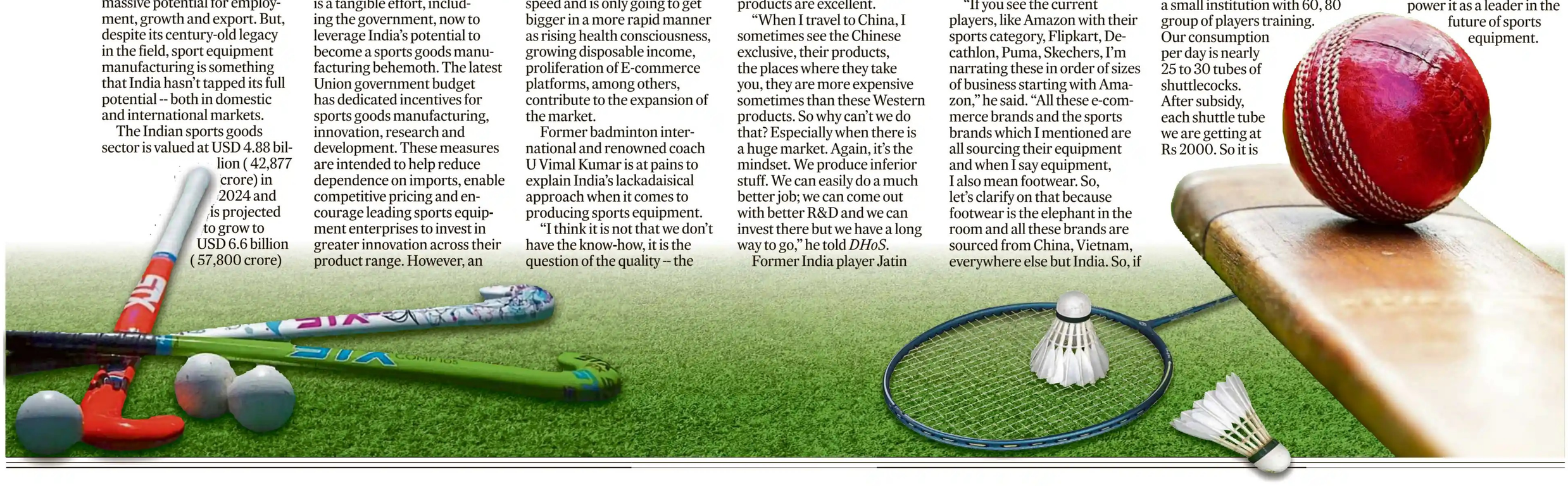
"The feather market is controlled by China. See, the cork has to come from Portugal. Glue has to come from Berlin. And the manufacturing, of course, is all done in the Hong Kong and Chinese area because they have the better geese (for feather). So why can't we do that: Encourage that in the Bengal area and Kerala there are a lot (of these birds).

"Shuttlecock has huge demand at every level -- amateur and professional. If you look at our academy itself, we are a small institution with 60, 80 group of players training. Our consumption per day is nearly 25 to 30 tubes of shuttlecocks. After subsidy, each shuttle tube we are getting at Rs 2000. So it is nearly Rs 50,000 a day! Imagine it across Bengaluru which has about 4000 to 5000 courts and expand it to India. So that is the sort of money involved for shuttlecock. A lot of people are playing badminton for leisure and there is a big scope."

Government policies, Paranjape feels, play a great role in such ventures, especially in terms of creating a right environment for investment.

"I would say we are quite a bit behind in terms of innovation and R&D because we've just not had the right government sops thus far and when you don't have government SOPs, your ability to raise capital is limited," he reasons. "Once your ability to raise capital is limited, then your ability to invest in innovation and R&D becomes very, very pragmatic. Your approach to innovation becomes pragmatic and so I think now that the climate is right when the government is loosening first strings from a capital perspective as well and I feel that it would make a difference."

If India can marry its deep manufacturing legacy with world-class innovation, standards and ambition, not just Jalandhar and Meerut, but more parts of India could power it as a leader in the future of sports equipment.



Aashay-trained Admiringly wins Calcutta Million

KOLKATA RESULTS

Aashay Doctor-trained Admiringly, ridden by Trevor Patel, won the Calcutta Million (1600 metre), the feature event of the Kolkata races on Saturday.

1. Pentire Handicap - 1600M: Verrazzano (Mrs Radhika Narredu) Vikrant 1; Royal Member (R.S.Bhati) 2; Mogambo (M.S.Deora) 3; Dancing Queen (Varun) 4; Wb: 1-1/4, 2-1/2, 3-1/4L. T: 1:40.25. TB: Ritesh. Fav: Verrazzano.

2. Aashna Handicap (Div-I) - 1100M: Cashable (Koushik Dutta) Trevor Patel 1; Marcolini (Imran Chisty) 2; Sir Winston (Farid Ansari) 3; Cache (Vinay Jaiswal) 4; Wb: 3/4, 1-1/4, 1/2L. T: 1:06.27. TB: Ritesh. Fav: Sir Winston.

3. Aashna Handicap (Div-II) - 1100M: Immortal Beauty (Mrs Radhika Narredu) Trevor Patel 1; Honey Cake (R.S.Bhati) 2; Memphis (M.S.Deora) 3; Winsangel (Imran Chisty) 4; Wb: 3/4, 2L, Shd. T: 1:06.90. TB: Ritesh. Fav: Immortal Beauty.

4. Calcutta Million - 1600M: Admiringly (Mrs Snigdha Kapoor) Trevor Patel 1; Saiko (Farid Ansari) 2; Silver Dream (M.S. Deora) 3; Wb: 2, Dist. T: 1:40.87. TB: Aashay Doctor. Fav: Admiringly. .

5. Carring Minds Cup - 1600M: Booster Shot (Koushik Dutta) Nikhil Naidu 1; Multi Success (Vishal Bunde) 2; Cigar Galaxy (Trevor Patel) 3; Duesenberg (Imran Chisty) 4; Wb: 3/4, Snk, 3/4L T: 1:37.98. TB: Ritesh. Fav: Dusenberg.

6. Metropolitan- 1200M: Pantazi (Mrs Menaka Gupta) Trevor Patel 1; Raffaello (M.S.Deora) 2; Black Eagle (Vishwa) 3; Glorious King (Imran Chisty) 4; Wb: 2, 1, Lnk. T: 1:11.61. TB: Aashay Doctor. Fav: Pantazi.

7. Sentouki Handicap - 2400M: Star Studded (Daulat Chabria) Vishal Bunde 1; Heart (Trevor Patel) 2; Multiverse (Gaurav Singh) 3; Karanveer (Azaruddin) 4; Wb: 1, 6, Dist. T: 2:35.37. TB: Rajesh Narredu. Fav: Heart.

Bengaluru Dividends

I race: Rs 12w; 11, 21, 84p; Fc: Rs 178; Q: Rs 145; Shp: Rs 92; Thp: Rs 128; Tri: Rs 5,345 & 6,872; Ex: Rs 7,643 & 1,345.
II race: Rs 25w; 12, 14, 13p; Fc: Rs 111; Q: Rs 66; Shp: Rs 38; Thp: Rs 56; Tri: Rs 149 & 49; Ex: Rs 636 & 560.
III race: Rs 26w; 13, 18, 18p; Fc: Rs 181; Q: Rs 131; Shp: Rs 42; Thp: Rs 46; Tri: Rs 618 & 319; Ex: Rs 2,757 & 973.
IV race: Rs 10w; Fc: Rs 20; Shp: Rs 14.
V race: Rs 107w; 20, 28, 11p; Fc: Rs 1,001; Q: Rs 378; Shp: Rs 59; Thp: Rs 48; Tri: Rs 3,364 & 1,009; Ex: Rs 6,053 & 2,594.
VI race: Rs 16w; 12, 13, 13p; Fc: Rs 96; Q: Rs 104; Shp: Rs 51; Thp: Rs 35; Tri: Rs 200 & 30; Ex: Rs 669 & 394.
VII race: Rs 20w; 10, 10p; Fc: Rs 32; Q: Rs 12; Shp: Rs 17; Thp: Rs 19; Tri: Rs 22 & 20;
Jackpot: Rs 3,562 (139). **Runner-Up:** Rs 610 (348). **I treble:** Rs 112 (506). **II treble:** Rs 1,252 (61).

CRICKET RANJI TROPHY

Karnataka start favourites

First-time semifinalists U'khand up against a daunting task

LUCKNOW, AGENCIES

First-time semifinalists Uttarakhand and Jammu and Kashmir will look to extend their dream runs when they take on heavyweights Karnataka and Bengal respectively in the Ranji Trophy semifinals beginning on Sunday.

At Lucknow's Ekana Cricket Stadium, Uttarakhand will face the eight-time champions Karnataka after continuing their rapid ascent in domestic cricket.

Having outwitted defending champions Mumbai in the quarterfinal in their own den, Karnataka now stand on the cusp of domestic glory.

The Devdutt Padikkal-led team has not lifted the trophy since its back-to-back triumphs in 2013-14 and 2014-15 seasons, under R Vinay Kumar. Chasing a ninth Ranji title, Karnataka bring pedigree and depth to the semifinal.

Mayank Agarwal (492) and Devdutt Padikkal (300) headline a strong batting lineup, while Smaran R (688) and Karun Nair (631) have also enjoyed prolific seasons.

However, it is their premier batter KL Rahul who has proved decisive, scoring 138 in the quarterfinal. During Karnataka's back-to-back title-winning seasons, Rahul had amassed a combined 1,871 runs across the two campaigns, underlining his importance to their championship ambitions.

The bowling attack is equally potent, with leg-spinner Shreyas Gopal claiming 41 wickets and pacers Vidwath Kaverappa (37) and Shikhar Shetty (33) providing quality support.

India seamer Prasidh Krishna further strengthens the pace department.

Uttarakhand booked their place in the last four with an innings-and-six-run win over Jharkhand in Jamshedpur.

For Uttarakhand, spinner Mayank Mishra starred with an eight-wicket match haul, including 5 for 22 in the second innings, and currently leads the tournament's wicket tally with 52.

All-rounder Jagadeesha Suchith, a former Karnataka player, has been pivotal, claiming 25 wickets with his left-arm spin and scoring 414 runs. Captain Kunal Chandela has been prolific with the bat, amassing 709 runs at an average above 6, while former Mumbai opener Bhupen Lalwani has added 409 as Uttarakhand finished second in their group before carrying that momentum into the knockouts.

Jammu and Kashmir scripted history by reaching their maiden semifinal.

The presence of KL Rahul (left) and R Smaran's timely return to form augurs well for Karnataka as they face Uttarakhand in the Ranji Trophy semifinal in Lucknow on Sunday. DH FILE PHOTO

LIVE 9:30 PM, STAR SPORTS

India's poor run continues with 2-4 loss to Belgium

ROURKELA, PTI: India's torrid display in the Rourkela leg of the FIH Pro League continued unabated as they lost 2-4 against Belgium to suffer their third consecutive defeat at the Birsa Munda Hockey Stadium here on Saturday.

This was the second meeting between the two teams in this leg, with Belgium having won the earlier fixture 3-1. India were then crushed 0-8 by Argentina in their next match here.

Alexander Hendrickx (**in pic**) (14th, 17th minutes) led the charge for the visitors with a brace, supported by goals from Hugo Labouchere (11th) and Arthur de Sloover (15th).

India showed improved defensive character in the second half by keeping a clean sheet, but strikes from Aditya Lalage (24th) and captain Harmanpreet Singh (37th) were not enough to overturn the early deficit after Belgium kicked off the proceedings and immediately established control.

India will play their final match of the Rourkela leg on Sunday against Argentina.

Desai, Ghorpade reach final

CHENNAI, PTI: Fourth seeds Harmeet Desai and Yashaswini Ghorpade sealed a spot in the mixed doubles final with ease, while G Sathiyan registered a hard-fought win to reach the men's singles quarterfinals in the WTT Star Contender Chennai 2026 here on Saturday.

Desai and Ghorpade were in total command in the all-Indian mixed doubles semifinal, beating wildcard holders Payas Jain and Syndrela Das 3-0 (11-9, 11-6, 11-9). They will now face second seeds Eduard Ionescu and Bernadette Szocs of Romania in final.

Angelisa favourite for feature race

MUMBAI SELECTIONS

Angelisa, to be ridden by G Vivek, from the stables of Pesi Shroff, will garner the maximum support in the Madras Race Club Trophy, the feature event of the Mumbai races to be run over a mile at the races on Sunday.

The races start from 4 pm.

1. Homi Mody Trophy - 2400M: Regina Memorabilis 1, Evaldo 2.
2. Madras Race Club Trophy - 1600M: Angelisa 1, Lorenzo 2, Antino 3.
3. Amateur Riders' Club Trophy - 1600M: Miracle Of Hanukah 1, Don Julio 2, Land Of Plenty 3.
4. Roman Rose Plate - 1200M: Gunfire 1, Phantom Strike 2, Zayyan 3.
5. VP Koregaonkar Plate - 1600M: Tajiri 1, Golden Heart 2, Azalea 3.
6. Municipal Commissioners' Trophy - 1400M: Juracan 1, Undercover 2, Foujita 3.
7. TM Goculdas Plate - 1000M: Esperanza 1, Youreunforgettable 2.
8. Ahmed I Rahimtoola Trophy - 1200M: Money Fair 1, Lucio 2, El Moran 3.
9. Stunning Plate - 1000M: Viennoise 1, Mirae 2, Aeon Flux 3.
Day's best: Viennoise. **I Jackpot:** 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6. **II Jackpot:** 5, 6, 7, 8 & 9. **I Treble:** 3, 4 & 5. **II Treble:** 6, 7 & 8. **III Treble:** 7, 8 & 9.

Man City win, Burnley stunned

LONDON, AFP: Marc Guehi scored his first goal for Manchester City to seal a 2-0 win over minnows Salford in the FA Cup fourth round, while Burnley suffered an embarrassing exit against Mansfield on Saturday.

Pep Guardiola's side took an early lead through Alfie Dorrington's own goal, but they made hard work of seeing off their fourth-tier opponents at the Etihad Stadium.

Results (4th round): Burton: 0 It to West Ham: 1 (Summerville 95th); Burnley: 1 (Laurent 21st) It to Mansfield: 2 (Oates 53rd, Reed 80th); Manchester City: 2 (Dorrington 6th OG, Guehi 81st) bt Salford: 0; Norwich: 3 (Maghoma 31st, Chrisene 82th, Toure 90th+3) bt West Brom: 1 (Maja 68th); Southampton: 2 (Larin 45th+1, Bree 109th) bt Leicester: 1 (Skipp 52nd).

It's vroom time in Goa

SAJITH B WARRIER
GOA, DHNS

Drivers in action during Round 4 of the Indian Racing Festival that got under way in Goa on Saturday. DH PHOTO

Engines revved and the adrenaline rush was pulpable as it was vroom time in Goa with Round 4 of the Indian Racing Festival (IRF) getting under way in the street circuit adjacent to the Manohar International Airport on Saturday (February 14).

For the record, there was plenty to cheer for the home crowd as Goa Aces' Raoul Hyman won the 21-lap Race 1 in 24:03.490 followed by Chennai Turbo Riders' Aqil Alibhai with Delhi's Ishaan Madesh rounding off the podium.

Alister Yoong of Speed Demons Delhi, won Race 2 in which Sohil Shah of Kolkata Royal Tigers finished second while Kichcha Sudeep's Kings Bengaluru's Ruhan Alva completed the podium.

The Goa Street Race forms Round 4 of the Indian Racing League, which is one of the two events, along with the Formula 4 Indian Championship (F4IC), which come under the purview of the IRF.

The custom-built FIA-grade street circuit, measuring 2.064kms featuring 12 turns carved into the airport's expansive layout, turned the event into an exciting spectacle as wheel-to-wheel racing was at its best on the streets of Goa.

All teams are competing in identical Ligier JS F422 machinery, powered by a 1.3-litre turbocharged Alpine engine. The combination of equal performance and a tight street layout has made the event where two major attributes (driver skill and team strategy) very attractive. Six teams are participating over five rounds with each team running two cars in a race.

And on Valentine 's Day, sports mixed with music, lifestyle and branding -- typical of Goan culture -- were in full flow at the street race.

Rain threat looms as India take on Pakistan with an eye on Super 8's spot

IT'S FINALLY ON AFTER MUCH DRAMA

SIDNEY KIRAN
COLOMBO, DHNS

Few games in the history of cricket have witnessed such drama even before it has begun. Even when India and Pakistan fought bloody wars, cricket somehow managed to remain unaffected despite occasional on-field exchanges. Not anymore, though, with politics completely entwined with sports now.

The marquee T20 World Cup clash -- the biggest money-spinner for the ICC -- between the two arch-rivals in the neutral territory of Colombo looked like a no-starter even until a week ago; the drama surrounding the spectacle was nothing less than a soap opera.

Literally every episode was played out in the media every day from Pakistan government's bombshell announcement of boycotting the contest to their cricket board making a U-turn and agreeing to compete on Monday. Diplomatic channels from unseen quarters were opened, including a call from Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake to Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, to make this match happen at the R Premadasa Stadium on Sunday.

An India versus Pakistan clash doesn't need any extra hype, but with plenty of bad blood having flown over the recent months, this one has gained a lot of traction. During the Asia Cup in Dubai last September, India skipper Suryakumar Yadav refused to shake hands with his counterpart Salman Ali Agha that snowballed into a major controversy. After triumphing in the final, India opted not to take the trophy from Asian Cricket Council President Mohsin Naqvi, and the peeved Pakistan's Interior Minister ensured the Men In Blue didn't lay their hands on the prize by locking it away.

Against this bitter backdrop, the two arch-rivals clash in what promises to be a close affair despite India's absolute dominance over Pakistan in the format, having won 13 of the 16 contests, including the last five affairs. In a bid to break the streak, Pakistan are banking on their spin quartet of Abrar Ahmed, Mohammad Nawaz, Shadab Khan and talk of the town Usman Tariq.

It's a move away from convention for a nation that prided itself on producing some of the deadliest fast bowlers in the world, but on the slow tracks of the subcontinent, especially in Sri Lanka, the formula seems to be working well for them. They were instrumental in spanking Australia 3-0 in the preceding series at home, and in the two games of the World Cup, they've been on the mark as well.

Despite playing just four international matches, Tariq has become the centre of attraction with his unique 'pause and deliver' action. Some former players have branded his action illegal while many have jumped to his defence, saying there is no specific law in cricket that prevents a bowler from stopping before releasing the ball. So expect a lot more chatter come Sunday with all of cricketing world's spotlight on him.

Defending champions India may be forced to make some tactical changes given the sluggish nature of the Premadasa surface. Just like Pakistan, they too are blessed with high-quality spinners and could field an extra one at the expense of a pacer. So, all-rounder Hardik Pandya may double up as the second pacer for Jasprit Bumrah with either Kuldeep Yadav or Washington Sundar pairing up with Axar Patel and Varun Chakravarthy. There's a possibility of dropping Rinku Singh and playing both Kuldeep and Sundar, considering the latter's ability with the bat.

India could also be boosted by the return of Abhishek Sharma with skipper Suryakumar Yadav indicating they'll play the explosive opener who missed the last game against Namibia due to stomach illness.

A win for either side on the occasion of Maha Shivaratri will guarantee the Super Eights ticket with a game to spare, but the fight will be for a lot more than that.

Indian players warm-up with a round of football for a practice session, ahead of their match against Pakistan in Colombo. PTI

PITCH

The R Premadasa Stadium pitch, historically, has played slow and it may not be any different on Sunday. Spinners will play the key role and ball may not come on to the bat as nicely as expected, making shot-making tougher. The boundaries are also big, giving spinners further ammunition.

WEATHER

The Sri Lanka Department of Meteorology issued a special weather bulletin on Friday regarding the formation of low-pressure area over southeastern Bay of Bengal. So there's 50-70 percent chance of rain during the game. It remained cloudy throughout Saturday with the skies opening up at 7:15 pm.

LIVE 7 PM

India vs Pakistan in T20Is

	Mats	Ind	Pak
Overall	16	13	3
In T20 World Cups	8	7	1

India v Pakistan in last 5 meetings

Year	Venue	Result
2022	Melbourne	Ind won by 4 wkts
2024	New York	Ind won by 6 runs
2025	Dubai	Ind won by 7 wkts
2025	Dubai	Ind won by 6 wkts
2025	Dubai	Ind won by 5 wkts

Record at RPS, Colombo

India		Pakistan
15	Mats	7
11	Won	5
4	Lost	2
73.3%	Win%	71.4%

Captaincy record

	W	L	NR	win %
Suryakumar Yadav	36	7	2	80.9
Salman Agha	29	16	-	64.4

India batting in T20Is in 2026

Vs Pace
Wkts lost - 23, Average Runs/wkt - 38.17, Scoring Rate - 11.86

Vs Spin
Wkts lost - 18, Average Runs/wkt - 29.33, Scoring Rate - 10.56

COMPILED BY **ARUN GOPALAKRISHNAN**

Squads: INDIA: Suryakumar Yadav (capt), Ishan Kishan, Sanju Samson, Rinku Singh, Axar Patel (vice-capt), Abhishek Sharma, Shivam Dube, Hardik Pandya, Tilak Varma, Washington Sundar, Arshdeep Singh, Jasprit Bumrah, Kuldeep Yadav, Mohammed Siraj, Varun Chakravarthy.
PAKISTAN: Salman Agha (capt), Babar Azam, Fakhar Zaman, Khawaja Nafeez, Sahibzada Farhan, Usman Khan, Faheem Ashraf, Mohammad Nawaz, Saim Ayub, Shadab Khan, Abrar Ahmed, Naseem Shah, Salman Mirza, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Usman Tariq.

SKY: We're ready for out-of-syllabus Tariq

SIDNEY KIRAN
COLOMBO, DHNS

An India vs Pakistan clash is one of the most highly anticipated affairs in world cricket. India skipper Suryakumar Yadav did admit there would be pressure ahead of the ICC T20 World Cup group stage match but asked his wards to 'play to their strengths' and not focus much on the opposition.

"According to me, if you play any game, there is always pressure. And when you play an India-Pak game, it's more about the occasion. It's a big platform obviously. So, no matter how much you say that it's just another game of cricket, at the back of the mind, it's human tendency, you know which game you are going to play," said Suryakumar at the pre-match press conference at the R Premadasa Stadium on Saturday.

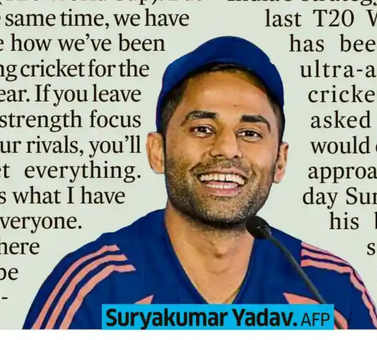
"And we don't play that often as well. But at the end of the day, we will try to keep things simple. Whatever we have done so far, whatever we have practised, we try to include it in the games. And we will try to place our best foot forward.

"They (Pakistan) are also playing good cricket, at the Asia Cup as well as here (T20 World Cup). But at the same time, we have to see how we've been playing cricket for the last year. If you leave your strength focus on your rivals, you'll forget everything. That's what I have told everyone. Yes, there will be pressure. There will be nerves. Butterflies in the stomach when we start the game tomorrow. But at the same time, if there is no pressure, there is no love to play the game."

The two big talking points ahead of the blockbuster clash have been Pakistan's strong five-pronged spin attack and the round-arm action of Usman Tariq. Suryakumar reckoned his team has enough firepower to counter them. "Sometimes, in an exam, you will get an out-of-syllabus question. You can't leave that question. You have to tackle that in your own way. Yes, he (Tariq) is a different character. But at the same time, we can't just surrender. We practise with similar types of bowlers, similar action in the 'nets'. And we will try to execute what we have practised in the sessions.

"They (Pakistan) have been doing well obviously with their bowling line-up and combinations. But yeah, we do have definitely some plans to try and tackle them when we play them tomorrow. We also have a similar kind of set-up when we go and play."

Defending champions India's strategy since the last T20 World Cup has been to play ultra-aggressive cricket. When asked if India would change the approach on Sunday Surya backed his batters to solve the puzzle on game day.


Suryakumar Yadav. AFP

Monank Patel

USA seek win over Namibia to keep hopes alive

CHENNAI, PTI: Revitalised by a commanding win over the Netherlands, the United States will look to keep their slim Super Eight hopes alive when they face Namibia in a must-win Group A clash here on Sunday.

With two wins from as many matches, India and Pakistan occupy the top two spots in the group, but a victory for USA would keep them in contention should either of the frontrunners falter in the remaining fixtures.

After losing their first two matches, USA roared back with a 93-run victory over the Dutch, recording the biggest winning margin by runs for an Associate team in T20 World Cup history. It was also their first win over the Netherlands after six previous defeats across formats.

A clinical batting effort followed by a disciplined spin performance laid the foundation for the turnaround.

Saiteja Mukkamalla, recalled to the XI, made full use of the opportunity with a fluent knock laced with authoritative off-side strokes. Shubham Ranjane provided late acceleration to propel the side close to the 200-run mark, while skipper Monank Patel chipped in with 36 after two low scores, though he failed to convert his start.

With a formidable total on the board, USA's bowlers struck early and never relented. Harmeet Singh led the spin charge, supported ably by Mohammad Mohsin and Nosthush Kenjige, as the trio shared seven wickets for 60 runs in 10 overs to dismantle the Dutch batting.

LIVE 3 PM

Proteas clip Kiwi wings

Markram, Jansen shine as SA close in on Super 8 spot

VIGNESH BHARADWAJ
AHMEDABAD, DHNS

The emotions associated with winning a T20 World Cup game against your rival are often joy and satisfaction. And New Zealand had never experienced those emotions against South Africa in the ICC showpiece.

On a warm Saturday evening here at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad, the present was in no mood to change the narrative of the past as the Proteas strengthened their hold on the Kiwis, winning five on the bounce in T20 World Cups, while strengthening their qualification grip on the Super 8s.

Aiden Markram's (86 not out) whirlwind fifty in concurrence with Marco Jansen's (4/40) first T20I four-for dished out a comprehensive seven-wicket win for the Proteas.

Once they restricted New Zealand to a below-par 175/7 in 20 overs, only the margin of victory was to be known with dew starting to play a role.

Markram turned out to be the architect of the chase, entertaining the 54,923-strong crowd to a 19-ball fifty after helping South Africa record the joint-highest powerplay score (83/1) in T20 World Cups.

Markram batted at a brisk pace and also shared a 62-run opening partnership with Quinton de Kock (20). He also saw through the chase in 17.1 overs while Ryan Rickelton (21) and Dewald Brevis (21) came and went.

Apart from Lockie Ferguson (1/33), Jimmy Neesham (1/15) and Rachin Ravindra (1/9), there was no life in the Kiwi defence as they were overshadowed by brilliance.

Earlier, Finn Allen (31) put Lungi Ngidi (1/34) through the shredder, smashing three fours and a six, collecting 18 runs in one over. Tim Seifert (13) tried to join in on the act but the extra bounce of Jansen did him in as the Kiwis lost their first wicket in the fourth over.

Rachin (13) was the next to go, again to Jansen. The 26-year-old now is without a T20 fifty in 21 innings and his performances cast a shadow over his inclusion in the XI.

The Kiwis endured turbulence and it was the after-effects of Jansen's brilliance. The lanky left-arm quick picked up his third as Allen failed to find the elevation needed to clear mid-on, hitting it straight to Markram. The Kiwis were reduced to 58/3 in the powerplay.

Markram introduced spin in the seventh over and it struck gold as Keshav Maharaj (1/24) got rid of Glenn Phillips (1), who played on while looking to go inside out.

But New Zealand found some fresh wind soon through Mark Chapman (48, 26b) and Daryl Mitchell (32, 24b) after a relatively gloomy phase of play.

South Africa's Marco Jansen (fourth from left) celebrates with team-mates after taking the wicket of New Zealand's Finn Allen during their T20 World Cup match at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on Saturday. PTI

SCORE BOARD

NEW ZEALAND

Seifert c de Kock b Jansen 13 (9b, 1x4, 1x6)
Allen c Markram b Jansen 31 (17b, 4x4, 2x6)
Rachin c Miller b Jansen 13 (8b, 1x4, 1x6)
Phillips b Maharaj 1 (3b)
Chapman c Rickelton b Jansen 48 (26b, 6x4, 2x6)
Mitchell c Stubbs b Ngidi 32 (24b, 2x4, 1x6)
Santner c Rickelton b Bosch 4 (10b)
Neesham (not out) 23 (15b, 3x4)
Henry (not out) 9 (8b, 1x4)
Extras (LB-1) 1

TOTAL (for 7 wkts, 20 overs) 175

Fall of wickets: 1-33 (Seifert), 2-57 (Rachin), 3-58 (Allen), 4-64 (Phillips), 5-138 (Chapman), 6-141 (Mitchell), 7-145 (Santner).

Bowling: Ngidi 4-0-34-1, Rabada 4-0-27-0, Jansen 4-0-40-4, Maharaj 3-0-24-1, Bosch 4-0-34-1, Markram 1-0-15-0.

SOUTH AFRICA

De Kock b Ferguson 20 (14b, 3x4, 1x6)
Markram (not out) 86 (44b, 8x4, 4x6)
Rickelton c Mitchell b Neesham 21 (11b, 2x4, 1x6)
Brevis c Mitchell b Ravindra 21 (17b, 1x4, 1x6)
Miller (not out) 24 (17b, 1x4, 1x6)
Extras (W-6) 6

TOTAL (for 3 wkts, 17.1 overs) ..178

Fall of wickets: 1-62 (de Kock), 2-102 (Rickelton), 3-131 (Brevis).

Bowling: Henry 4-0-38-0, Ferguson 3.1-0-33-1, Duffy 3-0-50-0, Santner 4-0-33-0, Neesham 2-0-15-1, Ravindra 1-0-9-1.

PoM: Marco Jansen.

Rashid, Banton seal the deal for Eng

Brook's men score 5-wkt win over Scotland

KOLKATA, PTI

Adil Rashid's triple strike set up the contest before Tom Banton's unbeaten half century guided England to a crucial five-wicket win over Scotland, keeping their Super Eights hopes alive in the T20 World Cup, here on Saturday.

In their must-win Group C clash after their shock loss to West Indies, two-time champions England first rode on Rashid (3/36) and Liam Dawson (2/34) to choke Scotland in the back end and bowl them out for 152 in 19.4 overs after opting to field.

Scotland were well placed at 113 for 3 in 12.3 overs and looked set to cross the 180-run mark, but a dramatic collapse of five wickets for 14 runs turned the match.

Rashid changed ends and grabbed three wickets, including that of skipper Richie Berrington (49), to derail the Scotland innings.

Dawson added two quick wickets as Scotland lost momentum completely.

In their modest chase, England were rocked early and slipped to 13 for 2 in two overs before Banton produced a match-winning 63 not out from 41 balls (4x4, 3x6).

Will Jacks smashed one six and a boundary off Brad Wheal to wrap up their chase in 18.2 overs.

England, who scraped through against Nepal in their opener but were outplayed by the West Indies, thus returned to winning ways and jumped to second spot in the group behind the West Indies with four points.

They now face Italy here on Monday to confirm their Super Eights berth.

Brief scores: Scotland: 152 all out in 19.4 overs (Michael Jones 33, Richie Berrington 49; Adil Rashid 3-36, Jofra Archer 2-24, Liam Dawson 2-34)
It to England: 155/5 in 18.2 overs (Jacob Bethell 32, Tom Banton 63 n.o., Sam Curran 28). **Result:** England won by 5 wkts. **PoM:** Tom Banton.

England's Tom Banton sends one out of the park during his match-winning 41-ball 63 against Scotland at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata on Saturday. AFP

Confident West Indies face tricky Nepal at Wankhede

MUMBAI, PTI: A confident West Indies will aim to maintain their winning run and cement their position at the top of Group C when they face a struggling Nepal in a T20 World Cup clash at the Wankhede Stadium on Sunday.

The Caribbean side has won both its matches so far and currently leads the group with the best Net Run Rate (1.625). Another victory would further strengthen its hold on the summit as it eyes qualification with momentum firmly on its side.

With a fixture against Italy in Kolkata to follow, West Indies know that successive wins in these two games will ensure they finish as Group C toppers.

Shimron Hetmyer. PTI

LIVE 11 AM

However, they cannot afford to lower their guard.

Despite Nepal's underwhelming campaign so far, the Associate nation has shown glimpses of resilience in patches and could look to spring a surprise. West Indies will therefore need to balance confidence with caution, ensuring they avoid complacency and stay focused on the task at hand.

Nepal, who had beaten the West Indies 2-1 last September in a T20I series, are coming off a deflating loss against Italy and will be keen to put their best foot forward.

While the West Indies entered this T20 World Cup largely under the radar -- partly due to their series defeats to New Zealand, Afghanistan and South Africa in the lead-up -- that narrative is quickly changing.

Their performances so far have been authoritative, suggesting a side that has quietly regrouped and rediscovered its rhythm at the right time.

Tucker powers Ireland past Oman

COLOMBO, PTI

Skipper Lorcan Tucker's blistering 51-ball 94 was complemented by a disciplined bowling effort as Ireland powered to a massive 96-run win over Oman in a lop-sided Group B T20 World Cup match here on Saturday.

Sent in to bat, Tucker launched a ferocious counterattack, smashing 10 fours and four sixes in his knock as Ireland recovered from 47 for 3 to 235 for five, the highest total of this T20 World Cup.

Lorcan Tucker. AFP

Chasing the massive total, Aamir Kaleem (50) and Hammad Mirza (46) gave Oman hope but once they departed, it all went downhill as they were bowled out for 139 in 18 overs. As many as eight batters scored in single digits.

Josh Little was the most successful bowler as he snared three for 16 in his quota of four overs. He was ably supported by Matthew Humphreys (2/27), Barry McCarthy (2/32) and George Dockrell (1/6).

Brief scores: Ireland: 235/5 in 20 overs (Lorcan Tucker 94, Gareth Delany 56, George Dockrell 35 n.o.; Shakeel Ahmed 3-33) bt Oman: 139 all out in 18 overs (Aamir Kaleem 50, Hammad Mirza 46; Matthew Humphreys 2-27, Barry McCarthy 2-32, Joshua Little 3-16). **Result:** Ireland won by 96 runs. **PoM:** Lorcan Tucker.

EMPIRE OF THE MIND

The long descent of India's parliamentary dignity

Gurucharan Gollerkeri
The former civil servant enjoys traversing the myriad spaces of ideas, thinkers, and books

The decline of parliamentary discourse in India did not arrive with a bang; it came by erosion. Sentence by sentence, interruption by interruption, motive by motive. What we witness today in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha is not merely bad behaviour or theatrical excess. It is the steady erosion of an institutional ethic – the slow unlearning of restraint, respect, and responsibility that once defined the Indian Parliament as a moral theatre of democracy.

In recent times, parliamentary speech has become indistinguishable from street combat: slogans replacing sentences, accusations replacing arguments, placards substituting for persuasion. Leaders of both Treasury and Opposition benches have participated in this degradation. This is not a partisan failure; it is a collective one. When senior ministers reduce criticism to insinuation, or when Opposition leaders personalise disagreement to the point of delegitimisation, they signal to the rank and file that dignity is optional.

Parliamentary speech, once aspirational, is now mimetic: the worst behaviour is quickly learned, repeated, and normalised. The tragedy is not that disagreement has intensified – disagreement is the lifeblood of democracy – but that disagreement has been stripped of intellectual seriousness, civility, and proportion. Disruption has become the default setting of parliamentary engagement.

This was not always so. The Constituent Assembly, operating in a nation broken by Partition and uncertainty, treated speech as a civic duty rather than a political weapon. Disagreements were sharp, sometimes bruising, but rarely demeaning. The dignity of the House was not an abstraction; it was a shared inheritance. Members subordinated personal ambition to constitutional purpose, ideological fervour to institutional continuity. To speak in the House was to speak to *history*, not merely to one's voter base or party leadership. What has changed over the last four decades is not simply the quality of individuals; parliamentary debate has migrated from deliberation to performance. Members now speak less with conviction and more to energise television studios and partisan echo chambers. The House has become the theatre of the absurd rather than a forum for intellectual discourse and lawmaking.

In this transformation, dignity becomes dispensable, and complexity becomes a liability. Language itself has hardened. Personal insinuation has replaced ideological critique. Motive is attacked where the argument should be tested. In recent years, we have seen parliamentarians questioning not just policies but the legitimacy, patriotism, or moral standing of opponents – most often without evidence. The idea that one can disagree without delegitimising the opponent has disappeared. This is a profound shift from earlier parliamentary culture, where adversaries recognised each other as constitutional equals even while contesting politics, policy, and principle.

The loss here is not merely aesthetic. Parliamentary discourse performs an educative function in a democracy as vast and unequal as India's. It models how power speaks, how disagreement is handled, how minorities are heard, and how authority is constrained. When Parliament descends into insult and obstruction, it licenses similar behaviour across the political ecosystem – from state legislatures to universities, from television debates to social media exchanges. The rot travels downward. It is tempting to attribute this decline to a generational fall from the lofty standards of the founding era. The early Parliament operated in a context where institutions were fragile, and legitimacy had to be earned daily. Today's leaders across the aisles operate with a sense of entitlement worsened by ideological polarisation, where legitimacy is often presumed rather than cultivated. The disregard for their constituents has replaced the humility of constitutional responsibility.

Equally damaging is the erosion of cross-party conviviality. Earlier generations of parliamentarians disagreed fiercely but dined together, read one another's work, and shared a common grammar of public reason. Today's political class often inhabits hermetically sealed worlds. When there is no shared language, there can be no shared standards of debate. Restoring parliamentary dignity requires institutional courage. Leadership must value legislative competence. Presiding officers must enforce rules without fear or favour. Members must rediscover that interruption is not argument and shouting is not authority. Above all, Parliament must reclaim its role as the highest site of national reasoning, not merely the loudest arena of partisan assertion.

India's Parliament once taught a diverse, newly independent nation how to disagree without disintegrating. That lesson is now at risk of being forgotten. The question is not whether the past was perfect – it was not – but whether the future can afford the debasing of Parliament. The question before the Members of Parliament is whether they still regard themselves as custodians of an institution they entered under oath, and the Republic that they temporarily represent. Democracy represents the interior architecture of power. Parliamentary discourse is one of its load-bearing pillars. If it continues to crack, the damage will not be confined to the Parliament alone. It will echo far beyond, into the habits of citizenship itself.

JUDGMENT DAY

Mass torts and elusive justice

When I went to law school, I was not given to much self-reflection on the subjects taught in the classroom. Law school life was difficult enough without the navel-gazing attached to why certain courses were in the curriculum. But the mass torts course, on the Indian legal response to the Bhopal gas disaster, caught my attention. After the disaster, the Indian government filed a suit in the United States against Union Carbide. As a 17-year-old, my instinct led me to puzzle over a question I am sure many of you might be considering: why a case in the US over a disaster in India?

Further shocks were in store for me. The government was arguing that Indian law, particularly the law on civil wrongs, was not mature enough to handle the disaster. In the folly of youth, I took this to be very odd behaviour – the Indian government, running its own legal system down in a foreign court. After acquiring grey hair, such as what remains, I understand this was a strategy to gain leverage over Union Carbide in a legal system that could make powerful corporations accountable for harm caused to the public.

I was reminded of my law school years when I read about the Johnson & Johnson (J&J) case decided by the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC) in 2024. J&J is a prominent global medical devices company, with its hip implants used widely in hip replacement surgeries in India. Many of the implants allegedly leaked harmful chemicals into bodies, causing patients debilitating pain and discomfort. Here is a parallel to the Bhopal case and the problem with legal redressal, even 40 years after the disaster.

India does not have a legal system that can effectively accommodate class action suits. There are alternatives, and none of these is optimal. The offender can offer to remedy the wrong voluntarily. J&J offered replacement surgery and a compensation of Rs 25 lakh for each affected person. Many victims found this compensation inadequate. The government could take *suo motu* action. It appointed an expert commission which investigated the matter and decided on a formula of compensation that could go up to Rs 1.2 crore for an affected patient. J&J has resisted this formula.

Nigam Nuggehalli
is a law professor who thinks that the law is too important to be left to the lawyers
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One could file a public interest litigation (PIL) in the Supreme Court on behalf of the victims. There was one such attempt, but in light of the government's compensation formula, the Court declined to proceed with the PIL. Finally, one could file a consumer complaint. Since 1986, India has had a Consumer Protection Act under which redressal commissions can provide relief to consumers who have been sold defective products and services. Depending on the compensation pleaded, one can file a claim in either a district, state or national redressal commission.

Lalita Rajpurohit, who underwent a hip implant surgery in 2007, filed a case in the NCDRC in 2013, seeking Rs 107.52 crore as compensation for financial loss and Rs 15 crore for 'trauma, suffering, and social humiliation'. After a lengthy recitation of the expert committee's findings, the Commission, in 2024, awarded Rs 35 lakh to the complainant, adding that if J&J had already paid her Rs 25 lakh, that sum could be deducted from the compensation. It held that the evidence regarding loss of income and medical expenses was insufficient.

Clearly, consumer law also has its limitations when it comes to mass torts. An individual claimant might find it difficult to provide evidence of harm, considering the costs involved in gathering supporting documents and lawyer fees. The Consumer Protection Act also allows for the possibility of class action suits, but these are subject to the same delays and costs that litigation is generally subject to in India.

Perhaps the best way forward is to look at preventive measures of two kinds: one is to ensure that the Indian regulator, in this case, the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO), takes action promptly and has systems to apprise it of any global problems with imported medical devices. According to the expert committee, J&J did not inform the CDSCO at the time of the application for the import licence that it had already discontinued the defective hip implants in Australia. Also, J&J has not maintained an authoritative registry of people who had received the defective implants. India must develop an informational infrastructure that addresses these problems. Given the delays and complexities of litigation in India, it is regulatory agility and information transparency that are more important than seeking post-disaster legal remedies.

GADFLY

Linear news in the age of reels

As a one-time hack and now teacher, battling the hyper-technology-bombarded 21st-century classroom, I find the newspaper as a form of communication and instruction more significant than ever. It's truly so due to the digitalised information overflows and cell-phone ordering of lives that afflict people of almost all ages. As a person who never overly genuflected to traditionalism, the surge of Artificial Intelligence, vanishing attention spans, and glut of 'information' have pushed me into a kind of guarded orthodoxy. In media literacy, we say older forms of information that were more 'linear' have gradually given way to the 'disruption' of news and information flows, such that its consumption for the last decade and more has been perennial and 'circular'. Its impacts in the higher education classroom are enormous and intractable. It has brought a jolt to critical thinking if you consider how much learning loss occurred during the COVID era and even before.

If the smartphone, social and online media are sole knowledge providers, short news aggregators, and AI are the one-way stations for intellectual development, you get sets of minds generally deeply constricted in critical thinking capacity and ability to grapple with complexities. Please don't mistake me, I am no anti-tech Luddite. The general upending of traditional media also means the qualities constituting the mental make-up of an enlightened citizen – the mantra of education in the widest sense of the term – flies out of the window. There has been much commentary on the impacts of all these on students worldwide, and it encapsulates the glaring contradiction of this age: the more 'information' there is, the less people know. The apparent democratisation of media has not necessarily led to more quality media or better-informed citizenry.

As a teacher at the undergraduate level, primarily teaching students transitioning from school to college, in an age of such commotion, it becomes even more important that 'linearity' return as a meaningful form of learning. The digital medium rarely obeys this pattern and has idioms, languages, and signatures of its own. For instance, it has invented the short capsule of news consumption, where a headline and a few more words convey information: a kind of return of the telegram from the early eras of modern communication. In the earlier eras, this was supplemented with longer forms of mass communication like the newspaper, magazine, radio, and later, television news bulletins and documentaries that aided in expanding critical thought on issues of public note. Now, the mobile phone has shrunk the world, yes, but also lateral thinking competencies that require pausing, distancing, and slowing.

Rahul Jayaram
teaches at the School of Film, Media and Creative Arts, R V University, Bengaluru
@rahjayaram

An exercise that media educators like me nowadays undertake is bringing the newspaper into the classroom, since several students might not have turned its pages purposefully for a long time. Each student gets a newspaper of note, and then they close-read it for understanding news and feature article structure; the differences between news and analysis, fact and opinion; the point and the politics of headlines, subheads, and news photography caption writing; and, of course, design thinking in newspapers. Later, they watch a news bulletin, like in the old days, to understand and appreciate getting news in a structured way. For many, these exercises work almost like obtaining knowledge from a good textbook. Things may appear boring, but in the hands of an impassioned instructor, they get to see the benefits of linearity; regularity that is in contrast with their wont for non-linearity, immediacy, and brevity. Digital natives find it hard that certain words have to be capitalised, italicised, in single or double quotation marks, and that every small or big element in a newspaper has meanings encoded in them that make for engrossing unpacking in the classroom. These exercises deepen cognitive skills, and learners get to appreciate some of the greater fundamentals of required knowledge acquisition.

For educators in the current scenario, defining what the media constitutes is itself an enormous challenge. Digital natives assume 'media' primarily consists of social media, content creation, influencer reels, and then journalism. So educators have to work backwards to explain the nuances and differences of various forms of media. Herein, the newspaper (of record) in the undergraduate classroom is a helpful way forward.

ROVING REFLECTIONS

Storm over a memoir

The controversy that has erupted over former Army chief General M M Naravane's unpublished memoir, *Four Stars of Destiny*, seems like a tempest in a teapot. The Leader of the Opposition, Rahul Gandhi, attempted in the Lok Sabha to quote from a published magazine article, citing words by the former Army chief and alleging that a 2020 border incident with China in eastern Ladakh was mishandled. He accused the government of having denied permission to release the memoir in an effort to hide the truth from the public.

After the Treasury benches created a ruckus over the charges made by the LoP, the Speaker prevented Gandhi from speaking, stating that members are not permitted to quote from unpublished material. The next day, an unfazed Gandhi brandished a physical copy of the book outside the Parliament. He spoke to the media and accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of not "fulfilling his responsibility".

In the excerpts from the memoir, Gen Naravane talks about the Chinese transgression and his subsequent calls to Rajnath Singh, S Jaishankar, and Ajit Doval. When the Defence Minister returned the call late in the night, he conveyed the message from the Prime Minister – *Jo uchit samjho woh karo* (do whatever you deem appropriate). This was to be an entirely military decision.

Penguin, the publisher, has clarified that the memoir has not been released in print or digital format, even as Gandhi's charges remain centred on the book. The excerpts from the unpublished work, published in a *Caravan* article, add layers to the controversy. One cannot be questioned for drawing parallels with Schrödinger's cat, at once alive and dead.

Based on a close reading of the article by Sushant Singh, a former Army Officer and lecturer at Yale University, this appears to be a case of interpretation by Singh, and subsequently, the LoP, rather than an apt summary of Naravane's position on the matter, as expressed in the excerpts from the memoir.

Capt G R Gopinath (Retd.)
builds bridges, sometimes by tearing down walls. He is a soldier, farmer, and entrepreneur

The former Army chief recalls in his memoir that he was "handed a hot potato", but he has not blamed the political leadership directly or implied a grievance on those lines. This, even the article confirms – "To be clear, at no point does Naravane criticise Modi".

The article traces events on August 31, 2020, starting with a call from Lt Gen Yogesh Joshi – the Chief of the Northern Command – to Gen Naravane at around 8.15 pm, reporting the movement of Chinese tanks and infantry towards Rechin La in eastern Ladakh. In a later call, Lt Gen Joshi discussed the possibilities of using medium artillery. After receiving the Defence Minister's input, the Army chief told Lt Gen Joshi to move the Indian tanks to the frontline. The tanks were now eyeball to eyeball. The Chinese stopped, and the immediate threat was averted.

In a candid and detailed 2022 interview with ANI, after his retirement, Naravane recounts what transpired around the border clashes with China that resulted in the death of 20 Indian soldiers and an unknown number of Chinese soldiers. He comes across as articulate, balanced, and with an impressive grasp of the big picture as well as a deep knowledge of the ground-level situation, like all great military leaders. He explains the SOPs; the ground rules for commanders at all levels are unambiguous. You will not fire unless you are fired at. These rules have been upheld by China and India for decades. This explains why both sides resorted to clubs and rods in some of the clashes.

Did Modi abdicate his responsibility? Clearly, no. The Prime Minister took the right call. It was a tactical decision that had to be exercised by the Army chief, not by the political leadership. Despite the immense pressure the Chinese incursion brought in, Naravane did not blink or dither. He stayed informed on the ground movements and, when given a free hand, made the right and strategically pragmatic call. What matters is that his reading of the situation turned out right.

There may be multiple interpretations of political decisiveness and accountability in this particular case, but it is also important to note that the country has seen independent military action during critical border stand-offs. A case in point is the September 1967 battle following China's renewed claims on Nathu La and attempts to cross over the LAC, accompanied by gunfire. Maj Gen Sagat Singh, the General Officer Commanding of the mountain division controlling Nathu La, losing no time, mobilised artillery, mortars, and machine guns and pounded the encroaching Chinese, causing heavy casualties.

The Army stood its ground. One must call the bluff of a bully. As Benjamin Disraeli said, "Courage is fire, and bullying is smoke".

STATE, MARKET, SOCIETY

Performance first: A real measure of public monopoly

Ashwin Mahesh
A social entrepreneur, founder of Mapunity and LVBL, and co-founder, Lithium, wakes up with hope for the city and society, goes to bed with a sigh
@ashwinmahesh

When an election is held, the public does not elect multiple governments. We elect one party – sometimes with its coalition partners – to pass laws, create budgets, provide law and order, and so on. Neither the public nor the Opposition can make up its own laws or budgets and expect those to be followed; the elected State has a monopoly on lawmaking and governance. This is both common sense and constitutional.

But what about public services? Can someone other than the State provide electricity to our homes? Can someone other than a government company run Metro? Around the world and even in India, there are examples of such things, so clearly they are not inconceivable. Some people even argue that private providers could do this better than the State, and in doing so, they would be fulfilling a public obligation better than the government itself.

Some services are monopolies because it doesn't make sense to have two different entities deliver them. The infrastructure and networks needed for power supply, for example, are logically best done by one entity, else the expenditure may be duplicated and wasteful. These sectors are considered natural monopolies. But which sectors?

This week, the Union Ministry of Power released its annual ranking and rating of power distribution companies. *DH* reported that Bengaluru's power distributor, BESCOM, received a C- rating and a red card (whatever that means!), and was ranked 51st out of 54 rated entities. Apparently, the agency scored 12.44 out of 100 marks in the rating system, a figure so low that one wonders why it is given a C- rating. Schools and colleges are not the only ones suffering from grade inflation!

By itself, is this low rating a case for privatising BESCOM? Perhaps not. But it surely raises the question – why has the State chosen to reserve this function to itself if it can't do a good job of it? Or, to put it differently, having chosen itself to deliver electricity, why is the State not doing a better job?

Monopolies, by nature, are obliged to do well precisely because they have been protected from competition. China's one-party rule is an oft-cited example. If there's only one of something, the public doesn't have the option of obtaining it from someone else. Naturally, therefore, people expect the protected entity – whether a party or a company – to perform to a high standard. And when that doesn't happen, people wonder if the monopoly should be ended.

Not all monopolies are natural. Some services can be provided by more than one entity. In fact, in some cities globally, even power supply is not considered a natural monopoly, and models have been developed to allow consumers to choose their preferred provider.

A few weeks ago, there was a flurry of exchanges online – later reported in the press – about whether BMTC's monopoly should be ended and private bus services should also be allowed to operate. The state government is against it, pointing out that a private operator may not consider the service a public good and may only operate buses on profitable routes, whereas the government accepts that it must serve all people, regardless of their ability to pay.

But does it do that now? The BMTC bus service outside the Outer Ring Road is limited. By global benchmarks, we have a deficit of 10,000 buses in the public fleet. India has chosen to set lower benchmarks for itself, and while I don't agree with that, even by that benchmark, we are at least 5,000 vehicles short. And this gap has only been widening.

Also, it is possible to cross-subsidise services on unprofitable routes using fare collections from the popular routes. Private companies can be mandated to do that, and a regulator can monitor compliance with such a mandate and issue fines for not meeting it.

In Delhi, which recently caught up to Bengaluru in the number of buses in its fleet, a growing portion of the services are now private. Some private operations also exist in Kolkata. In Tier 2 cities and smaller towns, private service is not uncommon. Within Karnataka itself, in Mangaluru, private service began decades ago, although KSRTC also operates part of the network.

The 'private or public' question is a red herring. While governments and policy wonks might have strong views on this, residents of a city usually don't venture into those. Their expectation is straightforward: they want regular, convenient, and comfortable bus service in their localities. They want uninterrupted power supply, with no surges damaging their electrical and electronic equipment.

If a government believes that delivering electricity or public transport is part of its natural monopoly in governance, then it must do those things well. The best defence of a public monopoly is great performance.

FOOTBALL INDIAN SUPER LEAGUE

It's 'Christmas morning' for BFC players

Top-tier football returns to city as Blues host Delhi SC

ADITYA K HALDER
BENGALURU, DHNS

Bengaluru FC forward Ryan Williams (left) and coach Renedy Singh interact with the media on the eve of their ISL opener against Delhi SC in Bengaluru. DH PHOTO / BK JANARDHAN

It's hard to ignore the irony when Bengaluru FC's Ryan Williams says: "It would be like Christmas morning for us" ahead of their 2025-26 ISL season opener against Delhi SC. After all, it has been more than three moons since Bengaluru FC played their last official game -- 102 days to be precise when the top-tier Indian football side made its group-stage exit at the AIFF Super Cup.

As far as their last Indian Super League match is concerned, it's 308 days since the Blues had the ISL final heartbreak at the hands of Mohun Bagan Super Giants on a sultry evening in Kolkata.

If this were to be a normal '2025-26 season' of Indian football, BFC could have been fighting for the title and would have been entering the fag end of the season by this time with the difference in title contenders and pretenders as clear as daylight.

But we are not in a normal season, after all. We, instead, are in a 91-match truncated ISL, which has stepped into a new reality. Where the year '2025' only represents for all the drama that took place off the field before the Sports Ministry had to step in and force AIFF and clubs to finalise a date.

That wasn't enough to solve the problems of Indian football. As BFC gear up to play their ISL opener at their home Sree Kanteerava Stadium against a repackaged Hyderabad FC in their new avatar as Delhi SC, the top-tier Indian football is poorer than its preceding season with a heavy drop in commercial rights and no title sponsor.

While the tournament has kicked off, one can feel pity in abundance for the clubs as some of them are yet to find a home stadium, some have lost major investors and have taken desperate decisions of players' pay cut with some also not having the money to field any foreign players.

Karnataka take upper hand

BENGALURU, DHNS: Karnataka posted a huge first innings total of 537 all out to put pressure on hosts Himachal Pradesh on Day 2 of the Elite Group D match of the Col CK Nayudu Trophy in Amtar on Saturday.

Resuming at 352/3, half centuries from tailenders Hardik Raj (75) and Yashovardhan Parantap (51) took Karnataka to massive total after Dhruv Prabhakar fell early in the morning session without adding to his overnight score of 93. Prashant Kumar claimed a fifer with a spell of 6/93.

Himachal finished the day at 114/1.

Brief scores: Karnataka: (O/n: 352/3) 537 all out in 142.2 overs (Prakar Chaturvedi 55, Faizan 52, Karthikeya KP 97, Dhruv Prabhakar 93 n.o., Aneeshwar Gautam 42, Samit Dravid 27, Hardik Raj 75, Yashovardhan Parantap 51; Prashant Kumar 6-93, Mridul Surroch 2-78) vs HP: 114/1 in 34 overs (Sagar Malhan 54, Atul Jaswal 35).

Jain University players pose with the trophy after winning the All India Inter-University Basketball Championship in Bengaluru on Saturday. STANDING (from left): Aadya Gowda, Anju, Kushi, Lokesh (manager) Dr UV Sankar (sports director), Puneeth Suresh (coach), Aahana, Netra, Sia Deodhar. KNEELING: Ashmitha, Mona, Sushmitha, Noami, Hasrhitha, Dhara.

Jain University win

BENGALURU, DHNS

Jain University ended a three-decade wait for a title as their women's team defeated Punjab University 74-51 in the final to win the All India Inter-University Basketball Championship here on Saturday.

Siya and Naomi scored 17 and 16 points each to star in the win for Jain while Pooja's 19-point haul for Punjab proved not enough.

Results: Final: Jain University: 74 (Siya 17 points, Naomi 16) bt Punjab University: 51 (Pooja 19, Nadar Kavr 13). HT: 40-28.

Third-place match: SRM University: 82 (Jeevika 18, Hemalatha 12) bt LNIPE University: 58 (Titiksha 14, Sonal Nahala 12). HT: 24-36.

Saloni shines for Karnataka

BENGALURU, DHNS: Saloni P took a 6/21 as Karnataka made lightwork of Assam with an eight-wicket victory to continue their unbeaten run in the Elite Group A of the Senior Women's One-Day Trophy in Rajkot on Saturday.

Saloni's spell exposed Assam's struggls as they were 128 all out in 38.4 overs.

Karnataka batters were in hurry as they reached the target in a mere 15.2 overs with Niki Prasad (39 n.o.) and Shreya Chavan (33 n.o.) contributing the most.

With their fifth consecutive victory, Karnataka remain atop the table with Maharashtra having identical number of points but falling behind due to inferior net run rate.

Brief scores: Assam: 128 all out in 38.4 overs (Amontika Munda 57; Saloni P 6-21) lt to Karnataka: 129/2 in 15.2 overs (Shishira Gowda 27, Niki Prasad 39 n.o., Shreya Chavan 33 n.o.). **Karnataka's next match:** Maharashtra (Feb 16).

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PUBLIC NOTICE

In The Supreme Court Of India
Extra-ordinary Appellate Jurisdiction
Special Leave Petition (Civil) No. 25111 Of 2024
With Prayer For Interim Relief
N.S. Vishwanath And Another .... Petitioner(S)/appellant(S)
Versus
Channegowda And Others ....respondent(S)

To,
1. Channegowda, S/o Kempaiah, R/at No. 2/a, 3rd Block, 8th Cross, 7th A' Main Road, Nandini Badavane, Bangalore - 560 096, Karnataka
Pid: 9058/2026 For R[1] In Slp(C) No.25111/2024 (Sec iv-A)
2. Gangadhara Murthy, S/o Kempaiah, R/at No. 2/a, 3rd Block, 8th Cross, 7th A Main Road, Nandini Badavane, Bangalore - 560 096., Karnataka
Pid: 9059/2026 For R[2] In Slp(C) No.25111/2024 (Sec iv-A)
3. Lakshmamma D/o Late Venkatesh, R/at Guruve Bovi Palya, Bychaguppe, Tavarakere Hobli, Bangalore, South Taluk, Bangalore District., Karnataka
Pid: 9060/2026 For R[4] In Slp(C) No.25111/2024 (Sec iv-A)
4. Chandrashekar S/o Late Venkatesh, R/at Guruve Bovi Palya, Bychaguppe, Tavarakere Hobli, Bangalore South Taluk, Bangalore District.,Karnataka
Pid: 9061/2026 For R[6] In Slp(C) No.25111/2024 (Sec iv-A)
5. K. Ramesh S/o Kale Gowda, R/at Kadabagere Village, Magadi Main Road, Dasanapura - Hobli, Bangalore North Taluk - 560 039, Karnataka
Pid: 9062/2026 For R[7] In Slp(C) No.25111/2024 (Sec iv-A)

Whereas The Petition For Special Leave Petition (Civil) To Appeal With Application For Condonation Of Delay In Filing, Exemption From Filing C/c Of The Impugned Judgment, Exemption From Filing O.T., Condonation Of Delay In Refiling Curing The Defects Above Mentioned (Copy Enclosed) Filed In The Registry By Mr. Rajesh Gulab Inamdar, Advocate On Behalf Of The Petitioner Above Named Was Listed For Hearing Before This Court On 18th October, 2024, When The Court Was Pleased To Pass The Following Order:-

"Applications for exemption from filing c/c of the impugned judgment and exemption from filing O.T. are allowed.

Delay condoned. Issue notice. Status quo, existing as of today, shall be maintained by the parties."

AND, WHEREAS the Petition for Special Leave to Appeal with prayer for interim relief along with application for APPLICATION UNDER ORDER V RULE 20 CPC FOR EFFECTING SERVICE THROUGH PUBLICATION above mentioned (copy enclosed) filed in the Registry by Mr. RAJESH GULAB INAMDAR, Advocate on behalf of the Petitioner(s) above named was listed for hearing before this Court on 05th January, 2026, when the Court was pleased to pass the following order:-

"1. Application seeking substituted service is allowed. Notice shall be published in two newspapers viz. Deccan Herald (English) and Prajavani (Kannada).

2. Learned counsel for petitioners is directed to file proof of publication along with an affidavit within four weeks. List the matter after six weeks.

NOW, THEREFORE, TAKE NOTICE that the above petition with prayer for interim relief will be posted for hearing before this Court in due course and you may enter appearance before this Court either in person or through an advocate on record of this Court duly appointed by you in that behalf immediately from the date of service of notice. You may thereafter show cause to the Court on the day that may subsequently be specified as to why delay in filing SLP delay in filing/refiling SLP be not condoned and Special Leave Petition and interim relief as prayed be not granted and the resultant appeal be not allowed.

You may file your affidavit in opposition to the petition as provided under Rule 14(1) of Order XXI, S.C.R.2013 immediately from the date of receipt of notice or not later than 2 weeks before the date appointed for hearing, whichever be earlier, but shall do so only by setting out the grounds in opposition to the questions of law or grounds set out in the SLPS and may produce such pleadings and documents filed before the Court/Tribunal against whose order the TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that if you fail to enter appearance as aforesaid, no further notice shall be given to you even after the grant of special leave for hearing of the resultant appeal and the matter above mentioned shall be disposed of in your absence.

ASSISTANT REGISTRAR
Dated:12th January, 2026

Copy to :-
* 1 Mr. Rajesh Gulab Inamdar (adv.)
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I, SEEMA RAMACHANDREGOWDA SATTAGANA HALLI. R/a #.1240, Sri Simhadri 1st main road. 3rd Stage, BEML Layout, R.R Nagar, Bangalore - 560098 Have Changed My Name From SEEMA RAMACHANDREGOWDA SATTAGANA HALLI To SEEMA VIJAY vide Affidavit Dated 14/02/2026 before Notary Mohammed Hussain.K. Bangalore

I, RANJU DEVI R/a #.6, Jain Temple Street, V.V Puram, Basavanagudi Bangalore -560004 Have Changed My Name From RANJU DEVI To RANJU KUMARI vide Affidavit Dated 14/02/2026 before Notary Mohammed Hussain .K Bangalore

I, HARIHARAPURA Venkatesha Murthy Vishwa Prakash S/o Venkatesha Murthy HS & Vidya Lakshmi PT residing at NO 507, Shri Durga Nilaya, 4th Main, M V Nagara, BEML Nagar, KGF Kolar Karnataka 563115. I Have changed my name to Vishwaprakash HV vide affidavit dated 12.02.2026 before Notary N.Srinivasa KGF. Henceforth I shall be called as Vishwaprakash HV only.

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Hashtag healing, trauma trending

From calling a boyfriend a narcissist to toxic break-ups, therapy jargon has moved from clinics into cafes, reels, and relationships. As mental health language becomes mainstream, are we gaining emotional clarity or losing nuance? Smitha Murthy examines what happens when labels replace lived experience

I broke up with him. He was such a narcissist, you know?"

I didn't know. All I knew was that she had started going out with Narendra just a few months ago. My friend didn't wait for my response. "Totally self-absorbed. It was getting all so toxic. I had to break up. For my own peace. Setting boundaries is so important, Smitha," she continued.

Narcissist. Toxic. Setting boundaries. We were in a cafe in Jayanagar, not in a therapy room. Yet, this was the conversation. My mind flew to another conversation two decades ago. Then, too, a friend had confessed to breaking up with his girlfriend. "We didn't get along," he shrugged. That was it. Conversation over. We didn't analyse boundaries and patterns. Perhaps, he may have called her a "bit crazy." But that was the closest we came to using any kind of mental-health speak.

I work in mental health. I go to therapy. I love talking and writing about mental health. In a country with the highest rate of suicide, it seems we need to speak more, not less. Because every time I say I have a therapist, I can almost see the mental wheels churning. "Oooh, wonder what's wrong with her?"

That's just one side, though. Where mental health is still a stigma. Where therapy is a mystery. Where words like "crazies and loonies" are bandied about ever so casually.

The other side of mental health talk

And then there's the other side, like with my friend at the cafe. In her 20s, she goes to therapy and gets "traumatised" if her pizza delivery comes 10 minutes late. I really don't know if Narendra was a narcissist, but I do know that the term refers to someone with Narcissistic Personality Disorder — rarely diagnosed — and not someone who is "self-absorbed."

These days, you might find someone using this word for anyone rude, selfish, or difficult. The minute a relationship ends, we rush to call it toxic. We are flooded with mental health content all the time. Health and wellness influencers are among the fastest-growing creators in India.

Young Indians are more likely to learn about health trends from these influencers rather than traditional experts. Whether or not these influencers have clinical training seems irrelevant. TikTok's #TherapyTok has around 1.7 billion views, and #MentalHealth on Instagram has about 49 million posts at the time of writing this story. I should be happy that there's so much talk around mental health. But I am also confused.

Are we diluting the essence of mental health in our attempt to make it more accessible? Therapy-speak, which is the casual use of psychological terms such as gaslighting, trauma dumping, triggers, narcissism, in everyday conversation and, of course, on social media, is all-pervasive.

Benefits outweigh negatives?

Sindhiya Vaithiyanathan, a therapist based in Bengaluru, is someone who isn't happy with this trend. "When they use such terms casually, it trivialises mental health, and, unfortunately, this trivialisation is now being normalised," she sighs. But Sindhiya acknowledges that the benefits of therapy-speak outweigh any negatives. "For some, it aids in articulating their concerns, and for others, it hinders deep work as they get stuck with the labels. In my experience, the benefits outweigh the risks in a culture like ours, where mental health is stigmatised."

Sindhiya V

For someone like Tanmoy Goswami, who describes himself as a "user-survivor," we aren't living in peak therapy culture.

"What is really happening is that an old, rusty tap — call it mental health conversations — has been wrenched open after decades, centuries, of being forcibly shut. You have to be okay with a lot of rusty water gushing out before a clear stream emerges." Knowing the right language, he avers, is a function of privilege. "I ask myself why somebody else using 'depression' or 'OCD' wrong is hurting me personally. Why does someone else's word choice feel like a threat to my lived experience?"

> Trauma now describes everything from catastrophic harm to ordinary disappointment. This isn't misuse so much as language doing what it always does when it goes mainstream. The consequence, though, is a flattening of intensity: when everything is trauma, we lose ways of naming gradations of hurt.

Pizza delivery ain't trauma

Yet, there are many for whom using a word like OCD to describe their way of arranging the books on their shelves invalidates their own experience.

Misusing terms like trauma or OCD minimises the experiences of people who actually live with PTSD or OCD. If you equate trauma with pizza delivery, then there could be a problem. Such misuse can create ableist, dismissive language. "I feel like my suffering is reduced to a vibe or a trendy hashtag," says Kanika G, who has lived with OCD for almost a decade.

OCD, of course, is much more than just counting doorknobs or arranging items with precision. It's repeated intrusive thoughts that can physically, mentally, and emotionally debilitate you. But do we really know that when we equate someone to having OCD because they have a need for cleanliness?

Have words lost meaning?

In a recent feature in *The Atlantic*, couples therapists reported that their clients were increasingly calling every disagreement 'gaslighting' and every conflict 'abuse.' Other terms included boundaries, triggers, and trauma bonds. Even attachment styles can be easily identified with an online test. Have words lost their meaning, then? I asked Dr Sharoon Sunny, who specialises in linguistics, the same question. It's a semantic drift, she states. Those from the Baby Boomers generation scoff at terms like depression and anxiety. "In our times, we just adjusted," is the common refrain.

That judgment can undermine those who really know what it is to go through depressive hell or debilitating anxiety. You have a word for it now. It doesn't mean that the symptoms came into existence now. PTSD was a term that only came into being in the late 1970s.

Sharoon Sunny

"Trauma now describes everything from catastrophic harm to ordinary disappointment. This isn't misuse so much as language doing what it always does when it goes mainstream. The consequence, though, is a flattening of intensity: when everything is trauma, we lose ways of naming gradations of hurt," Dr Sharoon explains. When everything upsetting is labelled as trauma, then it becomes hard to recognise the difference between a mere bad day and a singularly traumatic event that reshapes someone's nervous system.

"These words are both enabling and reductive. For many people who earlier lacked a socially legitimate language for distress, this vocabulary offers recognition — a sense that this feeling counts. At the same time, online communication rewards speed and recognisability. So these terms often become shortcuts or placeholders. Instead of narrating an experience, people point to a label and expect it to carry the full emotional load. In that sense, the word can end explanation rather than begin it," she says.

Online clinical verdicts

Nowhere else do you see this more than on social media platforms. Take LinkedIn, for example. Almost every other day, you see a viral post from someone who says their manager was toxic. Read through the post, and you will see a mix of poor feedback culture, overwork, unclear expectations, and conflicting styles of work and communication — not what a psychologist would call 'toxic' in the clinical sense of the term.

A few years ago, a friend told me that it was 'abuse' that I had shared with him my purchase of a Garmin watch, angered that I hadn't been mindful of my own privilege and his socio-economic status in doing so. What deeply unsettled me was not just the argument itself, but the way therapy-speak turned a normal, awkward moment into a clinical verdict. If every discomfort is labelled as 'abuse' or 'toxic,' then there's no room for repair. No room for human clumsiness. Needless to say, that friendship didn't last long, but those words still ring in my ears. And that's the problem. Words have impact. They have terrifying power. We are quick to dismiss labels but run to self-diagnose ourselves or others with the same labels. You are simplifying complex human dynamics. I think of it a bit like junk food for mental health. And the problem with fast food is that people mistake it for real nutrition. It's good to have once in a while, but real mental health language comes from understanding the complexities of our minds and lives.

> For many people who earlier lacked a socially legitimate language for distress, this vocabulary offers recognition and a sense that their feelings count. However, these terms often become shortcuts or placeholders. Instead of narrating an experience, people use labels and expect them to do all the work.

The context of privilege

This new vocabulary also comes with a 'class' accent. Linguistically, therapy-speak is also very English, urban, and platform-specific. Contrast this with Indian languages. Common Hindi phrases often include "*tension ho raha hain*," or "*dil bhaari ho gaya*," to loosely map distress, anxiety, or heaviness, but not actual words like trauma or depression. Someone watching a reel might say, "I was so triggered, it activated my trauma response," in English. But a Hindi speaker might just say, "*Dil ghabra gaya*." A Kannada speaker might say, "*yeshtu bhaya aitu, gotha*." Indian languages use broad terms that are often stigmatising (like *pagal*, *huccha*), but they rarely veer into diagnostic labels.

Dr Sharoon adds further perspective to this. English already signals education, urbanity, and global belonging; therapeutic language adds a layer of moral and emotional capital.

On social media, fluency in this vocabulary can signal not just awareness but virtue. Those without access to this register, often speakers of Indian languages, may find their emotions read as less articulate or less valid.

No labels, please!

We are becoming more fluent in mental health literacy, but we aren't necessarily becoming more precise. The real question is not whether we know the words, Dr Sharoon states, but whether we can still describe experience without immediately reaching for a label.

"Real emotional work is a journey of vulnerability where you dare to dive deep to identify, understand, process, and heal your feelings, emotions, and behaviours. It needs consistent and persistent efforts of self-work," Sindhiya says. "I would say that it is like peeling an onion. You peel layer after layer to reach the core or the essence of your being. However, in the end, you find that nothing but those layers put together is everything you were originally. It is messy, teary-eyed, revealing, yet also insightful, wholesome, and an exciting journey of self-discovery."

Now, to me, those are the words we should be using as we navigate this year. We can be messy. We can be teary-eyed because we broke up with someone without having to classify the relationship as toxic. We can call out bad behaviour without labelling it. We can offer empathy to those who speak of trauma and be mindful of our own usage of it. We can articulate our vast emotional landscape with words designed to hold space for them.

Therapy-speak or not, language is a tool. What matters is not the tool, but how we use it. And if we use that to convey this unfathomably chaotic inner world of ours, we create meaning. For us. For others.

Feedback from our readers

It is always a pleasure to hear what our readers think of the articles we publish. Here's a selection of responses we have received in recent weeks. *(The responses have been edited for brevity and clarity).* Mail your responses to **dhonsunday@deccanherald.co.in**

This is regarding the article on *black-winged kites (Rooting for Nature/Dec 8).* The article was very interesting and informative. I learn a lot through this column. Also, it is appreciated that the author takes the effort to explain difficult and scientific words.

S Kanniah

This is regarding the article on *DEI (Engendered/ Dec 28).* One view comes to mind is that the burden to prove the efficacy of DEI falls on DEI itself. Actually, they are introduced due to the demerits of irrational privileges by a section of people. The more one goes to prove, the more blame would crop up, for every small mistake in DEI. What has to be highlighted enormously is the demerits of privileges.

S V Anbazhagan

This is in reference to the article on dogs in the column *Paws & Life. (Art & Pursuits/ Jan 11).* I liked it very much. If I ever have a dog, I would, am sure, experience similar emotions. I wish to read more articles like this one.

Sannidhi Bhairannawar
Class V, JSS Central School, Dharwad
JSS Central School

Your column, *Ties & Knots* on the Gender page feels more like poetry than prose. Every word evokes emotions. I feel the author puts into words exactly what I feel and want to say. Thank you.

Johnson

I loved reading the article on *mothers and daughters. (Gender/ Dec 21).* Your article made me reflect on my relationship, which began with nothingness to hate and understanding in the present moment.

Devika Das

This is about the article on *black-winged kites (Rooting for Nature/Dec 8).* We too have a farm near Bengaluru where we get to see many birds. Your article is inspiring and relatable to us as well.

Philip Samuel

The question of pedestrian safety on our roads rarely invites attention from the powers that be, as the citizens who use the roads are powerless and are not even taken into consideration while designing the roads. *(Big Picture/Jan 25).* Unless this mindset changes, we can never expect improvements and since people walk because they must and not because they can on our battered roads. Pitiable situation calling for urgent attention and visible action on the ground!

V Padmanabhan

ASTROSPEAK
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In this reflective memoir, a foreign correspondent turns inward, taking readers from cancer wards to cherry-blossom boulevards, writes Savitha Karthik

Journeys beyond geography

What makes the sakura profound is not their beauty as much as their brevity, the author says, pondering on loss.

How does travel affect us? Beyond the physical, surface-level elements that come with travelling, being in a place far removed from our own backyards alters our being. Pallavi Aiyar's Travels in the Other Place: Pursuing the Self in Eight Acts seeks to examine precisely this. Tapping into her experience as a foreign correspondent and someone who has lived and travelled in several countries, from Japan to China, Indonesia, Spain and Belgium, among others, Pallavi's latest is rich with anecdotes and insights. While her earlier works, such as Orienting: An Indian in Japan, Punjabi Parmesan or even her debut, Smoke and Mirrors, are a mix of reportage and analysis, her latest is an intermingling of worlds – within and around her.

Neatly organised into eight 'acts', the book looks at travel not merely across physical geographies but in "the other place". The other place could be a childhood filled with books, 'the kingdom of illness' as she calls it, in language, pedagogy, passportism, reporting, grief, and yes, hair. She examines a gamut of questions that pertain to a sense of belonging and identity.

As someone who grew up in the Eighties, Pallavi's travels into the world of words and reading began with Enid Blyton. She reminisces about what reading did to an Eighties child and contrasts it with how her own boys took to (or didn't always take to) reading.

It is apt that she begins with the chapter on books and reading, before we are handheld into travels of other kinds, into "the other place". "There is an unsullied purity in the anticipated (and remembered) version of a place that is rarely experienced when one is corporeally there," she writes.

The 'act' on illness is a gentle and moving read, the time when she was diagnosed with cancer. Without being maudlin, Pallavi takes the reader through her appointments with oncologists, biopsies and chemotherapy. In fact, she brings a certain wit and a lightness of touch to her writing about "the kingdom of Cancer". She draws solace from the Japanese sakura, the cherry blossoms that bloom every spring. What makes the sakura profound is not their beauty as much as their brevity, she observes, likening her breast to 'sakura'.

Pallavi also travels into the world of language, fraught with questions of identity. The author talks about the language of Bahasa in Indonesia, which had "soaked up loan words from divergent cultural milieux", and the language policy of China, and her adventures with 'pinyin', the official romanisation system that's used in that country. Looking at language and how countries like Indonesia, China, Belgium or Spain work around it, and then looking at India, she writes about how India "eschewed a national idiom".

While taking pride that the multiplicity of tongues strengthened the country, and having all along believed that a single language as a national language was not for India, her engagement with other languages in other countries makes her critically examine India's language policy, and imagine a future for India, in which Indians shared a language that was neither English nor Hindi. She realises that when it comes to languages and nations, there's no one-size-fits-all solution.

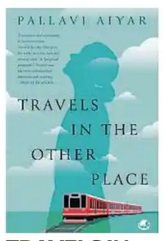
The chapter on hair is both a personal and journalistic take at once — Pallavi takes you down the rabbit hole of the wig industry, right from how discarded and given-away hair is collected in India, where it ends up, and how China is the largest exporter of human hair and synthetic hair products, quoting from Emma Tarlo's book on the topic, Entanglement.

Pallavi neatly weaves the hair trade story with the politics of hair itself. She recalls how a Sikh classmate came back to school with hair shorn following a school break in the aftermath of the assassination of then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1984. Hair coverings and the politics of the hijab also come under Pallavi's fine comb. "Hair is complicated. Covering it has stood for choice and identity as often as it has for oppression and coercion," she writes, asking if the hijab is a choice or an imposition.

Politics aside, the author also brings in her personal journey with wigs following her chemotherapy. "It's a revelatory place to travel in, hair," she observes.

One of the most poignant chapters in the book is the one on grief. Pallavi loses her mother, the famed news presenter of the Doordarshan era, Gitanjali Aiyar, and writes movingly not just about her loss but also about the kind of impact her mother had made on a generation of television viewers. She quotes fan mail from DD viewers – a student in Std III from what was then Bombay writes: "I do not go to sleep till the news is over, especially when you read the news," harking back to a simpler time, with none of the choices and distractions of today.

Pallavi recalls how her mother shared little handwritten notes during her cancer journey, dropping them into a 'Jar of Happiness'. Two years after her mother passed on, she has learnt all about grief and come to understand that "love illuminates the grief into something akin to beauty." Travels in The Other Place is eminently readable and thought-provoking, written in a manner that calls for journeys into one's own self.



TRAVELS IN THE OTHER PLACE
Pallavi Aiyar
Tranquebar, pp 185, Rs 599

Caught between faith and identity

Through a character's search for his hidden past, this intriguing novel asks whether memory divides or heals a fractured society, writes M K Chandra Bose

We are familiar with attempts to align history with a narrative that supports contemporary socio-political agendas. In such a scenario, history becomes an endless cycle of vengeance and reprisal. Memory gets weaponised, with tribal instincts and prejudice guiding human consciousness. But should we allow the past to dictate the present? At a time when religion, language, class and ethno-nationalism divide humanity, is there a way out to build a future that is more equitable and just?

Bengaluru-based writer M K Shankar, in his debut novel The Convert, confronts readers with the questions plaguing humanity in troubled times. The novel tells the story of Christopher, an orphan raised by the mysterious Father Francis. His search for his roots begins with the revelation that his Christian upbringing had concealed his origin as a Brahmin named Krishna Degaonkar. In the course of his scholarly pursuit, he stumbles upon the astonishing tale of Dharmadhara, a visionary whose story intertwines with Christopher's.

Vague restlessness

Dharmadhara's experiment to form a utopian community based on trust and equality ends disastrously after inviting violent backlash from the orthodoxy. The commune valued dignity and fellowship over dogma. Diverse forms of worship were anathema to the upper castes. There was resistance to the re-division of labour. Not many were prepared to forgo their past occupations and forget their caste identity. It was a community comprising people from diverse backgrounds — Lingayats, Goan Christians, Deccan Muslims, Madigas, Holeyas, Bedas, Kurubas, and Nayakas. From childhood, Dharmadhara felt a sense of guilt due to his privileged life and wondered why many people like him led such a pathetic existence. He found them not impure but poor.

Curiosity drove him to know more about how others lived. He felt his world needed urgent repair. Even years after leading a vagabond's life, he remains restless. Dharmadhara exhorts villagers to keep the environment clean and imparts lessons to children. His advice to them: question, observe, test and confirm for yourselves. His is a search for a moral self in a fractured world, inspired by the Buddha's compassion and Ashoka's renunciation. He believed in the innate goodness of human beings. People trusted him, as he had no airs. For him, the way forward is action born of love and care.

THE CONVERT
M K Shankar
ExLibris, pp 238, Rs 400

A slice of 18th- and 19th-century Deccan history forms the backdrop of the novel — a multilingual (Kannada, Marathi and Portuguese), caste-infested, faith-dominated milieu marked by daily struggles between 'devotion and dissent' and 'power and compassion'. Readers get an inkling of the tensions that shaped modern Indian society and spiritual thought. There are graphic accounts of people groaning under the oppressive caste system and elaborate rituals of purification. There are tales of people fleeing to the Deccan to escape the Portuguese Inquisition in Goa, with soldiers chasing them.

The novel joins a stream of literature that examines the moral and metaphysical dimensions of humanity. According to the author, The Convert is a philosophical and historical novel through which runs a thread of faith, caste and power. At the core of the novel is the story of identity, faith and how one comes to terms with the past. While memory may be weaponised to settle scores, it can also provide a path to dialogue and reconciliation, enabling a new beginning. The task is not easy. In the context of right-wing efforts to rewrite history, The Convert has added significance. The novel considers conversion not as an escape from one world into another but as a detour taken by fellow travellers. The Convert, originally planned as a biography, took 10 years to complete.

Shankar deftly uses the technique of a story within a story, along with elements of mystery. He faithfully portrays the bygone era. Eerie references to the devastating famine of the period, dubbed the 'skull famine' as the countryside was strewn with bones and skulls, point to painstaking research. Christopher's clashes with the Church expose the divide between Christ's teachings and the official doctrine, and the unedifying power struggle within. A good read for lovers of the historical novel.

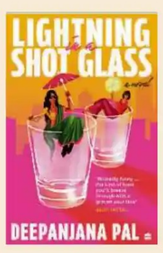
SPEED READS

From royal scandals to hunting panthers and midlife blues, these romances by Indian authors are fun while also tackling contemporary muddles.

You Can't Be Serious by Prajwal Hegde (Hachette): Aaditha Prathap is the brilliant mastermind behind India's trendiest café chain. Sure, her family's fortune sparkles like new money does, but Aaditha is fiercely her own woman. Vedveer Rathore Singh is an eco-warrior prince with a mission. After Harvard, he's back home and facing a harsh reality: his family's finances are not so princely. In this chaotic North-meets-South rom-com, worlds collide in the most unpredictable ways.

Love Bites And Pugmarks in Kabini by Lakshmy Ramanathan (Bloomsbury): Acclaimed wildlife filmmaker Dhruv Thimayya arrives in Kabini to film its most elusive resident — the famed black panther, Karia. He encounters Mira Ponappa, a woman at home in the wilderness. As Dhruv struggles to track Karia, he finds himself equally drawn to Mira. Set against the forest of Karnataka, this is a conservation thriller that blends wildlife fiction and slow-burn romance.

Lightning In A Shot Glass by Deepanjana Pal (HarperCollins): Things are not going well for Mumbai flatmates Meera and Aalo. Forty-year-old journalist Meera is convinced she's confronting a midlife crisis. Aalo is professionally and emotionally adrift and ends up sliding into the DMs of a ravishing war photographer. This is an ode to romance, and a tribute to the magic of Mumbai.



Speed Reads is a column for the bookworm who is short on time and reads on the go.

More ambiguity, less overstating?

While Nair's intention behind writing political fiction is admirable, she has not quite managed to be compelling enough, says Saudha Kasim

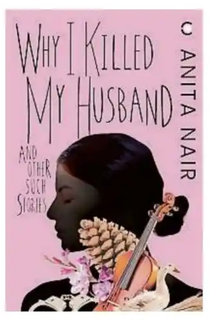
In Abbas Kiarostami's 2010 film, Certified Copy, a man and a woman (played by William Shimell and Juliette Binoche) meet and spend time over the duration of a day, roaming around a Tuscan town. Their interactions are confounding to the viewer: are they new acquaintances or former lovers? How much do they know about each other's lives — what's real in their conversation and what's made up? Nothing is made clear during the course of the film, and even its ending is a mystery.

See it one day during a particular season, and you think, yes, these two have known and loved each other. See it a few months later when the sun is shining brightly, and the weather is warmer, and you're not quite so sure about your previous understanding of the film.

Great fiction leaves lots of room for ambiguity — not everything needs to be tied up in a bow, and all endings need not be perfect resolutions. The role of the author, as Anton Chekhov, the master of the short story, put it, is to formulate the problem but not solve it.

So on reading Anita Nair's new collection of short stories, Why I Killed My Husband And Other Such Stories, the reader is sure to be left with a question themselves: is the author formulating problems through her fictions here?

As Nair explains in her preface, the purpose behind these stories is to depict the 'state-of-the-nation'. (PIC FOR REPRESENTATION)



WHY I KILLED MY HUSBAND
Anita Nair
Context, pp 280, Rs 599

The short answer, in my reading at least, is: not quite. As Nair explains in her preface, the intention behind these stories is to depict the 'state-of-the-nation'. Four of the six stories are mapped to a particular political issue that has been part of the national discourse for the past decade (and continue to be so when another tragedy strikes or another hearing denying bail comes up in the court).

The title story is a depiction of a toxic marriage where a quiet, industrious bank employee is married to a misogynistic Karnatik violinist with an inflated sense of importance and middling success in the classical music scene. It's the best of the stories in this book. It showcases Nair's strength as a writer with the plot mining the indignities and frustrations of educated Indian women stuck in stultifying marriages.

The story that reminded me of Certified Copy, as I read it, Twin Beds, is set in Bhutan and is also a portrait of a marriage. It starts promisingly — an Indian couple, Vasudha and Akash, arrive at a hotel in the Himalayas and are given a room with twin beds instead of a king-sized one as promised on the website. Each is secretly pleased with this situation since they loathe the sight of each other and feel safer in the lies they are telling each other rather than face the truth of their failing marriage. However, the shoehorning of a politician's evil action throws what had been, till then, an intriguing premise of a relationship finding its anchor in falsehood, off-kilter and any emotional investment the reader had in the story of these two lonely individuals fails to pay any dividends.

The remaining four stories — the schematic state-of-the-nation ones — don't formulate a problem. Nair has taken the issues — anti-Dalit discrimination in higher education, the attempts to strip Muslims of their citizenship through the CAA-NRC, the epidemic of sexual violence against women, and the rise of digital arrest scams — and given us stories that don't raise any new questions in the reader about the sociopolitical health of the Republic, since we've already read about these incidents in media reports.

It also doesn't help that Nair wants to shove facts and statistics in ways which don't help the flow of these stories. In Field of Flowers — obviously inspired by the Hathras rape and murder — a conversation takes place between two characters, Balram and his brother Kanhaiya, with the latter asking: "You do know the statistics, don't you?" to comfort his older brother. "According to the 2019 report of the National Crime Records Bureau, 32,033 rape cases were registered across the country. Do the math. That makes it an average of eight-eight cases every day. Of these, 94.2 per cent of rapes were committed by perpetrators known to the victim. Such is the state of our land."

Do brothers talk like this? Or would it be more convincing coming from the mouth of a television anchor reading off the teleprompter?

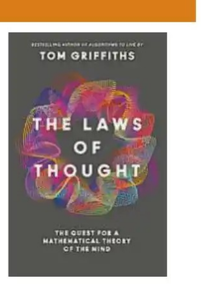
Nair's attempt to depict the state-of-the-nation is to be admired, but as proved by this collection, writing political fiction that compels the reader to look at the society we live in with a fresh perspective requires more than just taking a headline-grabbing issue and writing the most obvious tale around it.

READ OF THE WEEK

Everyone has a basic understanding of how the physical world works. We learn about physics and chemistry in school, letting us explain the world around us in terms of concepts like force, acceleration, and gravity — the Laws of Nature. But we don't have the same fluency with concepts needed to understand the world inside us — the Laws of Thought. While the story of how mathematics has been used to reveal the mysteries of the universe is familiar, the story of how it has been used to study the mind is not.

There is no one better to tell that story than Tom Griffiths, the head of Princeton's AI Lab and a renowned expert in the field of cognitive science. In this groundbreaking book, he explains the three major approaches to formalising thought–rules and symbols, neural networks, and probability and statistics, introducing each idea through the stories of the people behind it. As informed conversations about thought, language, and learning become ever more pressing in the age of AI, The Laws of Thought is an essential read for anyone interested in the future of technology.

Tom Griffiths is the Henry R Luce Professor of Information Technology, Consciousness and Culture in the Departments of Psychology and Computer Science at Princeton University.



Mumbai's East Indian fare is a fusion of traditional Indian dishes and Portuguese cuisine, best experienced at community weddings, celebratory events or festivals, writes Soumya Gayatri

EASTWARD HO!

"In East Indian homes, celebrations begin long before the guests arrive," says Abigail Rebello, explaining how festive cooking in Mumbai's indigenous East Indian community begins days, and sometimes weeks, in advance. "Whether it is Easter, Christmas, a wedding, or simply a birthday, we love to plan our menus early, get the masalas ready, and soak fruits in rum long before we finalise our guest list," she adds with a smile.

Rebello is the co-author of 'Jevayla Ye', an award-winning cookbook that documents traditional East Indian recipes passed down through word of mouth over generations. For her, festive food goes beyond the celebrations. It works as a living archive of centuries-old culinary history of the East Indian people and cherished memories of friends and family.

Dark fruit cake.

Bottle masala

Bottle masala is an aromatic mix of dozens of spices that are sundried, roasted and powdered before it is saved in recycled glass bottles, away from sunlight. This masala is specific to the East Indian community of Mumbai.

Mumbai's little-known East Indian community is one of India's oldest Christian groups, tracing its origins to Portuguese proselytising in the Konkan region in the 16th century. As a result, East Indian cuisine became a vibrant fusion of traditional Indian dishes and colonial Portuguese fare, blending flavours, ingredients, and techniques from the East and the West, best experienced at community weddings, festivals, and other celebratory occasions. "Our feasts are always elaborate with lovingly-cooked spreads," says East Indian advocate Godfrey Pimenta, a trustee of Mumbai's Watchdog Foundation. "There is rice, rotis, special breads, seafood and meat curries, sweets, pickles, and sometimes even homemade wine, all contributing to the sense of togetherness and festivity."

Potato chops as starters

East Indian festive meals typically begin with mouthwatering appetisers, such as potato chops filled with spiced minced meat. Crisp on the outside and soft on the inside, they are a universal favourite. Alongside potato chops are canapés topped with Russian salad — the East Indian version of the Russian Olivier Salad — which offer a refreshing, cooling start to the spicy mains that follow.

Pork vindaloo is a classic East Indian recipe.

Indulgent, slow-cooked mains

The mains are slow-cooked, deeply spiced (often with the signature East Indian bottle masala), and unapologetically indulgent. Roast chicken stuffed with a delicious liver filling and flavoured with cinnamon, black and green cardamoms, and dried chillies, is a mainstay at many festive tables.

Foogias. (PICS COURTESY: ABIGAIL REBELLO/ABBYSHEARTH.COM)

"Sorpotel, a rich stew of pork meat, fat, and offal with intense flavours, is one of my favourites," says Pimenta. "And of course, there's the spicy and tangy pork vindaloo, an all-time classic."

For Rebello, it is her mom's special quail moilee that is the highlight of every family wedding.

Tender and juicy, this slow-cooked quail dish pairs beautifully with two distinctively-named breads, varias and foogias, that are central to every feast.

Varias are deep-fried dough-nut-shaped wedding breads, made from lentil, rice, and all-purpose flours, leavened with yeast and left to ferment overnight. Foogias are soft, balloon-like breads that puff dramatically when fried and turn deliciously spongy as they absorb moisture from the air.

Rice dishes, which reflect the community's Indian roots, are also integral to East Indian celebrations. Wedding rice, a fragrant pilaf filled with raisins, cashews, ghee, and whole spices, is omnipresent, whereas tricolour rice, with its signature red, green, and white hues, is an absolute treat for the eyes.

The East Indian wedding pickle, a beloved accompaniment, is made from sundried carrots and raw papayas flavoured with ginger, garlic, chillies, and dates.

Time for desserts

Desserts like dense fruit cakes, walnut fudge, and coconut cookies contribute to the grand finale. The dark fruit cake, a dense and moist plum cake filled with rum-soaked dried fruits, is a permanent fixture at weddings and Christmas.

Bol de Coc, a soft, spongy coconut cake, reflects the community's coastal origins and a strong Portuguese influence.

One can never forget the iconic kulkuls – sweet, crunchy, hand-shaped desserts that form an essential part of every East Indian kuswar festive platter.

Homemade wines elevate the East Indian festive experience. Spicy ginger wine, brewed weeks in advance in old-style jars called barnis, warms the palate while rose petal wine, made from fresh petals, adds colour and fragrance to the table.

Stories and memories

For Mumbai's East Indian community, "these dishes are more than just festive indulgence," says Rebello. "They are laden with stories and memories, carrying our history and safeguarding our heritage," she adds. According to Pimenta, "these occasions drive people to dig out traditional recipes, bring back old spice blends, and cook dishes that might otherwise be forgotten."

Sweet, spicy and oh so Goan!

PREETI VERMA LAL

"Do you want Almondegas de Hottalica? Rissois de Cogumelos? Or, Sopa de Ervilhas com Pro de Alho?" In North Goa's Ourém, a tony bar and restaurant famed for its Luso-Goan cuisine, Chef Ines Soares was naming dishes that qualified more as tongue-twister than a scrumptious afternoon slurp. Before I could decode the names, my curiosity hinged on Luso-Goan? What's Luso-Goan?

Luso, the dictionary enlightened me, was a prefix that means "related to Portugal or the Portuguese." So, Luso-Goan (Portuguese-Goan) cuisine is shaped by Portuguese flavours, ingredients, and cooking techniques brought during 450 years of Portuguese rule (1510–1961). In the kitchen, it is more layered: Goan spices meeting Portuguese preservation methods, local meats and fish marrying European marinades, rice and coconut with vinegar, olive oil, and chillies and ancient toddy-based cooking merging with convent-style desserts.

Before the tongue-twisters could kill my appetite, Chef Soares simplified them for me: almondegas is vegetable cutlet, rissois are mushroom-filled pastries, and sopa is green pea soup.

Rissois are deep-fried or baked savoury pastry.

The Portuguese introduced the art of curing meat in salt, spice, and smoke.
(PHOTOS COURTESY: OURÉM BAR & RESTAURANT)

Balance of flavours

Luso-Goan food has a distinct sweet-spicy-sour balance with key ingredients being vinegar (especially toddy vinegar), Kashmiri chillies for colour and flavour, coconut milk and oil, pork, garlic, ginger, cloves, cinnamon, cumin, peppercorns, bay leaf, tamarind, and kokum. "Because the Portuguese ruled across the world, Goa's cuisine indirectly and subtly absorbed elements from Brazil, Mozambique, Macau, Madeira and the Azores," adds Soares who also teaches culinary art in Goa University.

In her book, Luso Goan Culinary Cookbook, Myra Silveira has included 60 original recipes of her father Jose Vasco Silveira who runs the Horseshoe Bar & Restaurant in Panaji. "In Portugal, chouriço was made with wine, paprika, garlic, and salt. But to make it survive tropical heat, Goans replaced red wine with toddy vinegar, paprika with fiery Goan red chillies, mild garlic with Indian garlic, gentle smoke with strong wood-fire drying," says Silveira who names vindaloo as the dish that is exclusive to Luso-Goan cuisine.

Even today, Luso-Goan cuisine is preserved lovingly in family kitchens, festive tables, and heritage restaurants.

Wellness

MOVE more, LIVE longer

Small and realistic increases in moderate to vigorous physical activity of 5 min/day might prevent up to 6 and 10 pc of all deaths in high-risk and general populations respectively, says a recent Lancet study. Dr Keshava R explains how to get moving and track exercise activity

In modern clinical practice, we are increasingly realising that one of the greatest threats to health is not only what people eat, but how long they remain seated. Long hours at desks, in front of screens, in cars, and on sofas have quietly made sedentary living a major risk factor for disease and early mortality.

Traditionally, we have advised patients to "exercise regularly." However, recent large-scale, device-based studies conducted in countries such as the UK, Norway, and Sweden have given us far more precise and practical insights. The most striking finding is this: even increasing daily physical activity by just five minutes and reducing sedentary time can significantly lower the risk of early death.

+5 MINUTES OF EXERCISE DAILY
Reduce risk of death by 10% for most adults; 6% for less active adults
30 MIN LESS SITTING
Reduces mortality risk by up to 7%
GET, SET AND GO...
+2 MIN BRISK WALK AND +5 MIN SLEEP
Extra year of life for those with the worst diet and exercise habits
+10 MIN BRISK WALK DAILY
Increased life expectancy of 0.9 years for inactive women and 1.4 years for inactive men
(Sources: Study in eClinicalMedicine Journal and The Lancet, January 2026)

Count your steps

- **Less than 5,000 steps/day:** sedentary
- **5,000–7,500 steps:** lightly active
- **7,500–10,000 steps:** moderately active
- **More than 10,000 steps:** very active

Although step counters in watches and fitness bands have certain limitations, they provide a practical and motivating benchmark.

HEALTH IN THE HEADLINES

It is important to distinguish between sedentary behaviour and physical activity. Sedentary behaviour involves prolonged sitting or lying down with minimal movement and little rise in heart rate, and is now seen as an independent health risk. Physical activity, in contrast, is categorised as light, moderate, or vigorous depending on how much the heart rate increases during movement.

Exercise intensity

A practical way to judge exercise intensity is by using your age-predicted maximum heart rate, calculated as 220 minus your age. For a 50-year-old, this equals 170 beats per minute. Below 65 per cent is light activity, 65–75 per cent is moderate, and above 75 per cent is vigorous. Reaching about 110 beats per minute while walking already qualifies as moderate activity, offering real health benefits and enabling personalised, measurable exercise guidance.

Recommended activity

- 30 minutes of moderate activity per day
- 5 days a week
- 150 minutes per week

For individuals with diabetes, Indian guidelines suggest around 200–210 minutes per week, which is approximately 40 minutes a day for five days.Even if you were to take up slow walking, it can contribute significantly toward this goal .

Device-based monitoring

What makes these studies particularly reliable is that they used device-measured physical activity.

Participants wore pedometers, accelerometers, and smartwatches that objectively recorded movement, heart rate, and sedentary time. In the past, patients would say, "I walk for 30 minutes every day," but this was based on self-reporting. These days, wearable technology can prove how long, how quickly, how many steps, and how many hours a person spent sitting down. This has made it possible for researchers to show a clear link between decreased mortality, more movement, and less time spent sitting still.

Power of small changes

The key message from these findings is simple yet powerful:

Increasing moderate physical activity by just five minutes per day and reducing sitting time can lower mortality risk.

This suggests that being healthy does not require intense exercise at the gym. Small lifestyle adjustments, like moving around the house, taking short walks during work hours, taking the stairs rather than the elevator, or walking while talking on the phone, can have a huge impact.

Beyond cardiovascular well-being

Reduced sedentary time and regular exercise have several positive effects on general health. It strengthens bones and joints, increases muscle strength and mobility, lowers stress, anxiety, and depression, and helps regulate blood pressure and diabetes. More significantly, regardless of the intensity of the activity, cutting down on daily sitting time has positive health effects.

Doctors must move beyond saying "exercise more" and instead advise patients to sit less, move more, track their activity, and add even five extra minutes daily for better health and longevity.

(The writer is HOD & consultant - interventional cardiology at a Bengaluru hospital.)

PREMATURE AGEING

Dangers of working 70 hours a week

DR NARENDRA BS

If you are working 60 to 70 hours a week and it feels like your body is ageing faster than the calendar is ticking, then it is not just your imagination. Working excessively long hours brings about a series of biological changes that resemble those that happen during ageing: inflammation, metabolic strain, poor sleep, and even cellular-level changes.

Working long hours regularly increases your "allostatic load," which is the cumulative damage resulting from repeated stress responses. A repeatedly heightened stress response flattens the normal cortisol rhythm and increases low-grade inflammation, which are key factors in ageing and chronic disease. After several months and years, this manifests as higher blood pressure, worse cholesterol, insulin resistance, and a greater risk of heart disease and stroke.

There's growing research linking disrupted sleep and shift-work patterns to shorter telomeres and other molecular signs of ageing — in short, your cells can show "older" markers after prolonged circadian disruption. So late nights and chronic sleep debt may speed cellular ageing processes.

Long hours also drive behaviours that contribute to poor metabolic health, such as missing meals or binge eating, reduced physical activity, increased sitting, and poor sleep.

These behaviours increase the risk of developing metabolic syndrome (a group of high BP and blood sugar, high lipids, and high waist circumference), which itself accelerates vascular ageing.

Late nights and chronic sleep debt speed up cellular ageing processes.

Why this matters now

WHO and ILO analyses show that working long hours (≥55 hrs/week) is linked to a higher risk of stroke and ischemic heart disease and is responsible for a substantial number of premature deaths globally. This isn't fear-mongering; it's population-level evidence that repeated overwork shortens lives.

What you should do

- Follow consistent seven-eight hours of sleep/wake cycles; it resets hormonal cycles and cuts inflammation.
- Set a "move every 45-60 minutes" reminder. You can boost glucose sensitivity and lessen the harmful effects of excessive sitting just by walking for five minutes.
- Include more protein and fibre to prevent sugar highs.
- Practise breathing, take a brisk walk, or a mindfulness break to cut cortisol.
- After a 60-70 hour work week, plan at least one lighter week in the following four to six weeks for recovery.
- Get regular blood tests done to identify potential problems before other serious symptoms appear.

(The writer is lead consultant – endocrinology & diabetology at a Bengaluru hospital.)

The International Olympic Committee has recently stated that a new policy on eligibility criteria for transgender athletes will be announced this year. Meanwhile, Kanav Narayan Sahgal examines the debate around participation of transgender women in the female category of competitive sports

Fair play or unfair edge?

Should transgender women be allowed to compete in the women's category of competitive sports? Would doing so meaningfully advance the inclusion of a historically underserved and underrepresented group within competitive athletics, or would it instead perpetuate unfairness against another group (cisgender women) who purportedly face a biological disadvantage relative to their transgender counterparts?

These questions reverberated through the halls of the United States Supreme Court in early 2026, as the justices completed oral arguments in two landmark cases that will shape the future of women's sports in the country. The cases in question involve Lindsay Hecox and Becky Pepper-Jackson—two young transgender girls caught in the crosshairs of state laws (one in Idaho and the other in West Virginia), that barred them from participating in the girls' sports teams of their respective schools.

Indeed, the issue of transgender inclusion in girls' and women's sports has been animating sociologists, philosophers, medical professionals, sports-governing bodies, lawmakers, and politicians for some time now. And given the global nature of sport—particularly in the realm of international competition—this debate, while largely driven by US legal and political discourse, is now influencing conversations well beyond American borders, including in India. In 2022, for instance, the Kerala High Court upheld a female transgender athlete's right to participate in the sports category of her choice in the absence of a separate transgender category. A bench comprising Justice Arun VG observed:

"It is my considered opinion that a transgender person has an equal right to participate in competitions. If the organisers have not made arrangements for participating transgenders, then the petitioner will have to be permitted to participate in her chosen category."

The United States Supreme Court, however—now marked by a conservative supermajority—appears poised to move in the opposite direction. Some experts suggest the Court's ruling could even pave the way for a nationwide ban on transgender inclusion in girls' and women's sports. Notably, the United States does not legally recognise a third gender category either and globally, only about seventeen countries (including India) formally recognise transgender or non-binary identities under the law. This leaves transgender athletes particularly vulnerable to exclusion from most, if not all sporting activities.

No clear answers yet

How then, does fairness come into the picture when it is claimed that transgender athletes have a biological advantage over cisgender women?

ENGENDERED

Contrary to popular belief, the scientific evidence on these biological advantages is far from settled. For every study suggesting an inherent athletic advantage, there exists another showing limited or no meaningful difference, particularly following gender-affirming hormone therapy. In fact, lower courts in the US grappled with these evidentiary disputes years ago by relying on testimony from competing expert witnesses.

On one side was Dr Joshua D Safer, MD, FACP, FACE—a staff physician in endocrinology at Mount Sinai—who testified in favour of transgender inclusion in girls' and women's sports, arguing that testosterone suppression largely mitigated performance-related physiological differences. On the other side was Dr Gregory A Brown, PhD, FACSM, a professor of exercise science at the University of Nebraska at Kearney, who argued against their inclusion, claiming that biological advantages persisted despite hormone therapy. Yet courts found Dr Safer's testimony more credible than Dr Brown's, even noting that at least one study that Dr Brown cited reached conclusions directly contrary to the claims he was trying to make. Much of the scientific literature examining physiological differences between cisgender men and women and between transgender women and cisgender women rarely if ever support categorical exclusions or blanket bans in sports. It gets more complex when considering cisgender women with Differences of Sex Development (DSDs) or conditions such as polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), which can naturally elevate testosterone levels. If testosterone alone were dispositive, these women too might be considered "unfairly advantaged" despite not being transgender—a conclusion that sporting bodies and courts might be reluctant to endorse.

Physiology as a defining factor?

Therefore, this raises a deeper, more fundamental question: should sex itself remain the primary organising category in competitive sports? Some scholars have proposed alternative frameworks—drawing comparisons to the classification systems used in the Paralympics—that assess athletes based on functional ability alongside sex, with the goal of creating fairer and more inclusive competition for athletes with different physiological characteristics. However, critics counter that sex-based categories have always existed in competitive sports and do so precisely because they are administratively simpler to implement and reflect broadly observable physiological distinctions.

Instituting case-by-case eligibility determinations, or creating entirely new sporting categories for transgender/non-binary athletes may prove impractical when participation numbers are small and/or when logistical and financial costs are high.

More longitudinal studies, larger sample sizes needed

Ultimately, principles of fairness and inclusion must be balanced with care. Decisions governing athletic participation should be grounded in the most current and rigorous scientific evidence available, while also ensuring that neither women nor transgender people are relegated to the margins through sweeping exclusions rooted in political rhetoric rather than empirical findings.

Therefore, if there is any consensus to be drawn, it is this: more longitudinal studies, with larger sample sizes and across different sports and populations, are needed to better understand the physiology of male and female bodies and how athletic performance evolves over time with hormone suppression.

Until then, lawmakers, sports authorities, and policymakers must proceed cautiously—ensuring that no group finds itself perpetually in the crosshairs of blanket bans based largely on fear mongering.

(The author is a communications manager at Nyaaya, the Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy and can be reached at sahgalkanav@gmail.com)

Eligibility rules FOR TRANS ATHLETES

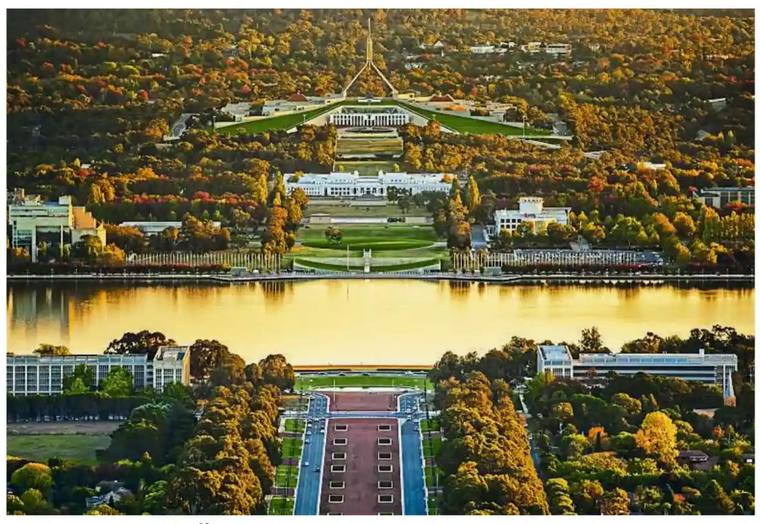
- The IOC has recently announced that global sport leaders have arrived at a consensus on a new set of eligibility criteria for transgender athletes.
- Currently, different sporting federations maintain their own eligibility regulations for transgender athletes, and these vary widely. For example, World Athletics' 2023 policy and World Aquatics' 2022 policy stipulate that, to be eligible to compete in the women's category, transgender female athletes must not have experienced any part of male puberty beyond a prescribed threshold and must have continuously maintained serum testosterone levels below a specified limit.
- In contrast, World Rugby and World Boxing have implemented strict, no-exceptions-barred blanket bans, under which transgender women are categorically excluded from competing in women's categories, irrespective of past physiological development or hormonal status.
- It remains unclear what regulatory direction the IOC's proposed eligibility framework will ultimately adopt. It is imperative that any such framework be grounded in principles of fairness, inclusion, and proportionality, and be informed by evidence-based assessments of competitive advantage and athlete safety.

Weightlifter Laurel Hubbard, the first openly transgender woman to compete at the Olympics, (Tokyo 2020) sparked conversations around fairness and policy. (FILE PIC/REUTERS)

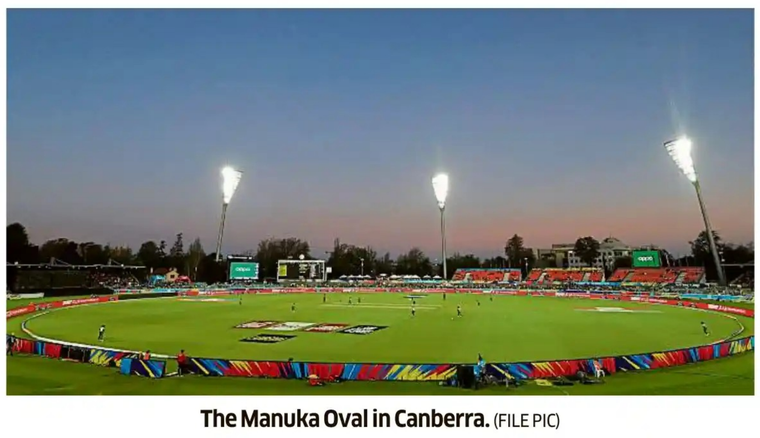
Travel

Heading to Australia? It's a good time to plan a trip to the capital, ahead of the Indian women's T20 fixture at the Manuka Oval on February 19, writes Teja Lele

The case for CANBERRA



Parliament House. (PICS COURTESY: VISIT CANBERRA)



The Manuka Oval in Canberra. (FILE PIC)

The National Arboretum is a conservation hub and home to thousands of endangered trees.

Australia's capital is often bypassed in favour of tourist magnets like Sydney and Melbourne. But a few summer days in Canberra fray that reputation, courtesy long golden evenings, outdoor festivals, the sparkling Lake Burley Griffin, and a sense of unhurried assurance.

This month, the city will find itself on Indian radars as the Indian women's cricket team tours Australia, with one of the matches scheduled in Canberra (February 19). The fixture may offer a reason to visit, but is far from being the only one.

Marvel at the planning

Chosen as Australia's capital in 1908 as a compromise between Sydney and Melbourne, Canberra was meticulously planned.

That intentionality is visible even today: wide avenues open onto bushland, public buildings are surrounded by sculpture gardens rather than concrete, and nature feels central rather than an afterthought. Nowhere is this philosophy clearer than at Parliament House, designed by architectural firm Mitchell/Giurgola & Thorp. Set low into Capital Hill rather than towering above it, the building was designed to be walked over—literally. "The idea was that the people should always be above the politicians," explains Shirine Chaudhry, my guide during a tour.

The massive flagstaff, iconic grass-covered roof, light-filled interiors and sweeping lawns make the Parliament as much civic space as seat of power. "You're meant to experience democracy as accessible, not intimidating," Chaudhry says.

Be a culture vulture

Across Canberra, cultural institutions are the city's quiet heavyweights. The National Gallery of Australia showcases a collection of more than 155,000 works of art, including the world's largest collection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art. The post-modern National Museum of Australia is composed of several vibrant individual spaces pieced together like a jigsaw puzzle—hinting at the diversity of the museum's collection.

Culture and nature coexist in the Australian capital, with time outdoors woven into everyday life. At the heart of the city is Lake Burley Griffin, where walking and cycling paths stay busy, kayaks skim the water routinely, and families spread out picnic rugs along the shore. At dawn, hot-air balloons drift quietly overhead, offering a view of a city where the built and the natural blend seamlessly.

Explore the arboretum

Green space is never far away. The Australian National Botanic Gardens showcase native plant life and can be explored on a 45-minute guided ride aboard the electric Flora Explorer bus. At the National Arboretum, 44,000 rare and endangered trees stretch across 250 hectares, with lookout points that offer stunning views. And just beyond the city's edges, walking trails and nature reserves allow explorers to keep going.

Not to be missed is the Canberra District wine region, which houses as many as 140 vineyards and more than 50 wineries. The region has earned international recognition for cool-climate varietals, facilitated by the altitudinal range, temperature variations, vineyard elevations, and different soil types. Wine tastings at the wineries here are a reminder that Canberra's pleasures reveal themselves slowly.

That equilibrium follows me as I leave the city. "Canberra is smack in the middle—two hours from the snow, two hours from the beach," says Berys, my driver, as she heads to the airport. "It's Australia's best-kept secret."

VIBING TO THE Melbourne beat

DEEPALI DHINGRA

48-HOUR GUIDE

It's easy to lose yourself in Melbourne, a friend told me before I set off for Victoria's beautiful capital. It is only when I reached the vibrant city in Australia and explored its labyrinthine streets, grand malls, serene gardens, charming cafes, and lively markets, that I truly understood what she meant by her statement. Two days in Melbourne are certainly not enough, but if that's all you have, then tick these experiences off your list for a memorable visit.

Melbourne Cricket Ground

Walking up to the historic Melbourne Cricket Ground, counted among some of the largest cricket grounds in the world, feels surreal. One can almost hear the excited cheers of the crowd when the very first test cricket match was held here in 1877 between England and Australia. Or you can envision cricketer Simon O'Donnell smashing one of the longest sixes in cricket history in 1993, right here on this hallowed ground. There's even a red chair amidst the blue where the ball had hit, as a memory of that historic moment.

Boating on River Yarra

If you've ever dreamt of being the captain of your own boat, there's no better place than a boating experience on River Yarra. The instructor's guidelines kept ringing in my head as I navigated the handle and steered the boat in the calm waters.

South Melbourne Market

There's a cheerful bustle of shoppers inside one of Melbourne's longest running markets which has been around since 1867. Look for the historic bell, once used to signal traders at the start and end of each day. Sample fresh and flavourful oysters, artisanal cheeses, and croissants, among others and end the tour with a coffee at a coffee shop. From the freshest seafood and marinated meats to local fashion, fresh produce, and charming souvenirs as well as a food hall to satiate those post-shopping hunger pangs — this market has it all.

Melbourne Skydeck

Riding on the high-speed lift to the 88th level of Melbourne Skydeck was unnerving but the sight that greeted me from the top of Australia's highest observation deck more than made up for the jitters. Melbourne's skyscrapers, gardens, water bodies and colourful streets shimmered in the glorious evening sun.

My heart pounded as I stepped inside a transparent glass cube, aptly called The Edge, which jutted out three metres out from the building and suspended almost 300 metres above the city. An immersive virtual reality experience awaits at the Voyager Theatre.

From adventure parks to museum galleries and lush gardens, I seemed to fly above some of Melbourne's most iconic locations.

Whether you're soaring above the skyline or navigating the river at your own pace, Melbourne proves that even a short stay can leave you with a lifetime of stories.

A tram passes by the Flinders Street Station.

Neil Patil
Founder, COO & CTO
Veena World
neil@veenaworld.com

Resurgence

The moment you set foot in Japan, what draws you in instantly is its quiet harmony between the ancient and the ultra-modern. Towering glass-and-steel high-rises stand respectfully beside centuries-old prayer spaces. Amid the neon glow of arcades and city streets, the calm of a tea ceremony flows undisturbed. Even on a busy bullet-train platform, there is a fleeting moment of absolute stillness just before departure. These scenes are not merely pleasing to the eye; they carry the living imprint of a long and layered history.

Every experience here, no matter how small, reflects a journey shaped by loss, resilience, and conscious rebuilding. Japan's present-day peace, discipline, and innovation did not emerge overnight. They were forged through some of history's most devastating defeats and profound human suffering. To truly appreciate Japan today, one must understand how deeply the past has shaped its values.

As you stroll through Kyoto's tranquil gardens, speed from Tokyo to Osaka on the Shinkansen, or experience the sincerity and precision of Japanese hospitality, you are not simply observing efficiency or tradition. You are witnessing the outcome of a nation that rebuilt itself around restraint, mutual respect, and long-term thinking. Discipline here is not enforced; it is cultivated. Punctuality is not pressure; it is courtesy. Respect is not performative; it is instinctive. This transformation began with the Meiji Restoration of 1868. Emerging from centuries of feudal isolation, Japan undertook rapid modernisation to compete with Western powers. Railways, universal education, modern industries, and Western governance structures were adopted at remarkable speed. Japan firmly placed itself on the global map. Yet alongside progress grew militarism and imperial ambition, driven by the belief that survival required expansion.

Victories in the First Sino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War elevated Japan's standing in Asia, but nationalism soon overshadowed civilian leadership. During Emperor Hirohito's Shōwa era, expansionism intensified. Japan invaded Manchuria and China, and the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 drew the United States into the Second World War. This marked a decisive turning point.

The Pacific War proved catastrophic. Relentless bombings reduced cities, including Tokyo, to ashes. By 1945, much of urban Japan lay in ruins. The atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki created some of the most harrowing scenes in human history and remain powerful global symbols of peace and disarmament. With the Soviet invasion of Manchuria, defeat became inevitable. On 15 August 1945, Japan surrendered, bringing its imperial ambitions to an end.

What followed was a nation in shock. Industries had collapsed, inflation soared, food shortages were severe, and millions were homeless. Between 1945 and 1952, Japan was occupied by Allied forces under U.S. General Douglas MacArthur. Sweeping political, social, and economic reforms were introduced. The 1947 Constitution transformed Japan into a parliamentary democracy. The emperor became a symbolic figure, civil liberties expanded, women gained rights, and militarism was renounced. It marked a profound psychological and cultural reset.

As the Cold War unfolded, U.S. policy shifted toward rebuilding Japan as a key economic ally. The U.S.–Japan Security Treaty ensured stability, while industrial revival accelerated. The period from 1955 to 1973 came to be known as the Japanese economic miracle. Government and business worked closely to drive growth in steel, automobiles, shipbuilding, and electronics. Infrastructure expanded rapidly, exports surged, and a strong middle class emerged. Japan's return to the world stage was symbolised by the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, the launch of the Shinkansen, and its growing role in global trade and diplomacy. From the ashes, Japan rebuilt itself into one of the world's most respected economies.

Today, Japan stands as a masterclass in balance. Technology serves calm rather than chaos. Systems are efficient without being aggressive. Robotics, automation, and thoughtful design simplify daily life, while tradition remains deeply rooted. Tea ceremonies, seasonal rituals, reverence for nature, and collective discipline coexist seamlessly with innovation. For travellers, Japan is not just a destination. It is a living lesson in resilience and renewal. Its journey from devastation to global leadership reminds us that even the greatest collapse, when met with humility, unity, and purpose, can become the foundation for an extraordinary resurgence.

Japan

A Country That Unfolds Gently

Walking through Kyoto's Arashiyama Bamboo Grove, you still feel a silence shaped by centuries. Just hours away, at Tokyo's Shibuya Crossing, the future rushes past. This contrast is where Japan's soul truly lives. Historic cities like Kyoto, Nara, and Kamakura form Japan's foundation, while Tokyo, Osaka, and Yokohama represent its forward-looking spirit. Japan believes that respecting the past and practising discipline in the present leads to a brighter future-and this philosophy is visible everywhere.

Oh! I Didn't Know This

- Vending machines across Japan sell everything from hot coffee to umbrellas.
- Tokyo's iconic Shibuya Crossing sees nearly 2,500 people crossing the road at the same time, calmly and in perfect order.
- Slurping noodles loudly is considered good manners in Japan.
- Mount Fuji is a perfectly symmetrical volcanic peak and, on clear days, is visible even from Tokyo.
- If a train in Japan is delayed by even a minute, passengers are formally apologised to.
- Capsule hotels- compact, futuristic sleeping pods - are a common sight across Japan.
- In Kyoto, geishas are still trained in traditional music, art, and etiquette.
- Cherry blossom season in Japan lasts only a short while and is celebrated with picnics under blooming trees.

Why Has Japan Become So Popular Among Indians?

At first glance, Japan feels unfamiliar. Its disciplined lifestyle, distinct customs, language, and food can seem intimidating. Yet, as you begin to understand it, Japan quietly draws you in—until you realise you've fallen in love with it.

Trains here are delayed by an average of just eighteen seconds. Road discipline is so natural that horns are rarely heard. Every detail, from driving to gift-wrapping, reflects thoughtfulness and respect.

There is no tipping culture—service is seen as responsibility, not transaction. Time is deeply valued, and discipline is practised as habit, not force. Japan seamlessly blends advanced technology with traditional values. From the calm of ancient temples to the speed of the Shinkansen, the balance between old and new is deeply felt. Japan teaches without words—and stays with you for a lifetime.

Spot & Circle

Spot These Hidden Japanese Icons

- Japanese woman in a kimono
- Red Torii Gate
- Bullet Train (Shinkansen)
- Cherry Blossom Branch • Sushi Rolls
- Veena World Tour Manager
- Temple Roof Silhouette
- Maneki Neko (Lucky Cat)

Veena World Travel Crossword

Can you find 10 Japanese philosophies?

O	U	Q	A	X	G	O	M
M	E	U	J	B	F	E	O
O	O	M	S	U	I	J	N
T	M	K	G	S	K	I	O
E	O	I	L	H	I	S	N
N	I	N	G	I	G	T	O
A	Y	T	M	D	A	I	A
S	A	S	V	O	I	J	W
H	R	U	I	G	D	D	A
I	I	G	H	I	N	Z	R
C	A	I	O	B	Y	E	E
X	E	G	A	M	A	N	A
W	A	B	I	S	A	B	I
M	K	A	I	Z	E	N	V

Useful Japanese Words & Phrases

Japanese people are calm, gentle, and always willing to help. When you try speaking even a little Japanese while in Japan, they truly appreciate it. So, remember a few of these handy words and phrases:

English	Japanese
Hello	Konnichiwa
Good Morning	Ohayo Gozaimasu
Good Evening	Konbanwa
Good Night	Oyasumi Nasai
Thank You Very Much	Arigato Gozaimasu
Excuse Me / Sorry	Sumimasen
Please	Onegaishimasu
Yes / No	Hai / Iie
Where is the toilet?	Toire wa doko desu ka?
How much is this?	Kore wa ikura desu ka?

How Would You Like to Experience Japan?

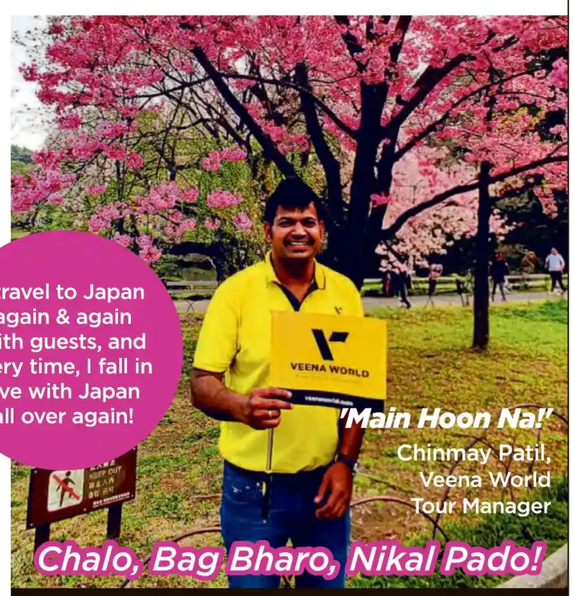
Your time, preferences, and budget shape how you experience Japan, and with thoughtfully designed travel options for every style-from comfort to discovery-Veena World helps you choose what suits you best and explore Japan with complete confidence.

Group Tours
Japan's unique culture and pace make group tours the most worry-free way to travel. With everything planned end to end and Veena World's trusted Tour Manager guiding you, you can simply enjoy a smooth, well-paced journey. These tours range from 5 to 17 days, priced between ₹1.75 lakh and ₹6.25 lakh, with cherry blossom departures being especially popular and often sold out.

Customised Holidays
Prefer travelling at your own pace with family or close friends? Veena World's customised holidays are thoughtfully designed around your interests and comfort. Our expert team plans your private Japan itinerary, with 24/7 virtual support from our guest relations team, so you're never truly alone. You can also choose to travel with a Tour Manager for added ease and confidence.

Women's Special & Seniors' Special Tours
Among Veena World's most popular tours, these are carefully designed for comfort and safety. For the cherry blossom season alone, several Women's and Seniors' Special departures are already sold out.

Corporate Tours
Veena World has organised tours for over 40,000 corporate travellers worldwide. With a specialised MICE team, we seamlessly manage incentive tours, conferences, leadership meets, and team offsites.


I travel to Japan again & again with guests, and every time, I fall in love with Japan all over again!
VEENA WORLD
'Main Hoon Na!'
Chinmay Patil,
Veena World
Tour Manager
Chalo, Bag Bharo, Nikal Pado!

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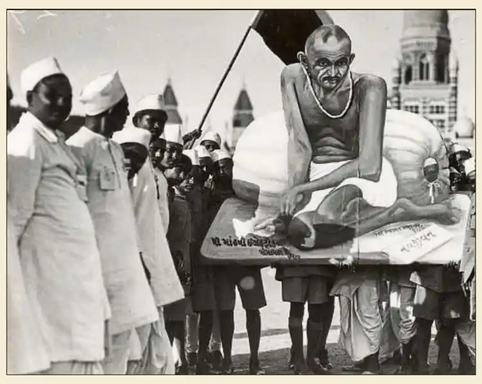
ON THE PALETTE



A picture of Gandhi taken around during the procession (1930-1931).

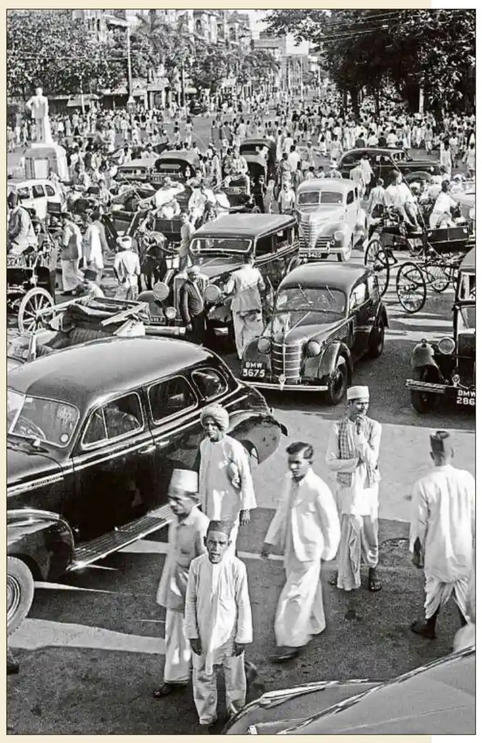
ALL PICS COURTESY: THE ALKAZI COLLECTION

Sarojini Naidu, after her release from the Central jail (1930-1931).

Lilavati Munshi addressing a crowd on the Azad Maidan, in front of the BMC building (1930-1931).

A blueprint for protest

An ongoing exhibition in Mumbai takes the viewer on a visual journey through the unfolding of the Civil Disobedience Movement. Devina Dutt has the details



Homai Vyarawalla, Bombay, early 1940s.

A police officer snatching away the flag from a Desh Sevika during a meeting on the Esplanade maidan, Bombay (1930-1931).

Between the Dandi Salt March in 1930 and Mahatma Gandhi setting sail to attend the Second Round Table Conference in London as the sole representative of the Indian National Congress on 29 August 1931, the Civil Disobedience chapter in the history of the Indian Freedom struggle had come into its own.

Presented by the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya (CSMVS) in Mumbai and the Alkazi Foundation for the Arts (AFA) and the Nursey Album in the latter's collection, the aptly titled Disobedient Subjects exhibition takes you on a visual journey around Bombay, today's Mumbai, to witness the unfolding of the Civil Disobedience Movement against colonial rule in British India's financial capital from a century ago.

We see grainy black and white images of well-known South Bombay landmarks with swarming crowds from multiple perspectives. In one striking top shot of Flora Fountain, there are a variety of men's traditional headgear, showing the glorious diversity of the city and its inhabitants turned protestors. A large number of citizens and many women amongst them, gather around the colonial city's buildings and civic architecture, picketing, in effect, preparing a blueprint for protest that would anticipate people's collectives, and more in free India.

It is impossible not to be affected by the way in which ordinary everyday citizens and women, particularly, stare back, unafraid, at the camera with a certain mutinous resolve after they have performed an illegal act (such as making salt illicitly, or clutching at the nationalist flag, or having boycotted stores selling European and British goods). As Sumathi Ramaswamy, the curator who first noticed these while working on Gandhi and visual culture, says, "This is an act that required immense courage— and fortitude. And the fact that they frequently do so with a tiny smile suggests as well that they were likely aware of what they were doing and want the camera to capture (for posterity) their act". Curated by the US-based scholars Sumathi Ramaswamy and Avrati Bhatnagar, the project began during the Covid years.

The Nursey album piqued their interest because, although it includes photographs of Gandhi, the bulk of the 245 images do not show much of his presence. Instead, the focus is on the people of Bombay (the "disobedient" women, men, and some children), the larger environment in which they displayed their disobedience, and the range of "disobedient" activities they undertook between April 1930 and August 1931.

The photographs also offer vital clues to the history of photography and the juncture at which it was becoming a tangible and lively presence on the streets of colonial India's big cities, especially Bombay. As the curators point out, from almost the time of the camera's invention in Europe in 1839, Bombay was a key node in the global network that developed around photography.

"In Bombay, we hear of photographers Narayen Daji, Hurrichund Chintamon, Shivashanker Narayen, and Shapoor N Bhedwar, whose works are now being studied by scholars for the visual perspective they provide on the city and its residents in the late 19th century. Generations of Indian photographers produced images not unlike

A salt raider on the Wadhala [Wadala] salt pans, 1930.

what a European photographer was producing, but from the early years of the 20th century, as the anti-colonial movement began to take to the streets, the camera followed," they add. And as the camera itself became lighter, cheaper and more mobile, the photographer also went into the streets. The photographs remind us of the complex and skilful political negotiations that ran through the Freedom Movement. As Ramaswamy points out, when Gandhi "disobediently" led his fellow Indians, he was operating in the context of the British empire, which at its core was authoritarian but not necessarily illiberal. "The British empire also prided itself on the rule of law — and of course, the genius of civil disobedience was to call into question and protest rules and regulations that may be legal but were not necessarily just, moral, or ethical", she says. The images speak of solidarity and camaraderie that emerge when citizens come together. Today, as narratives, especially around the Freedom Movement, are being contested and quite belligerently, exhibitions like this can help restore some of the disappearing nuance from public debates, history and collective memory.

TWINKLE TOES

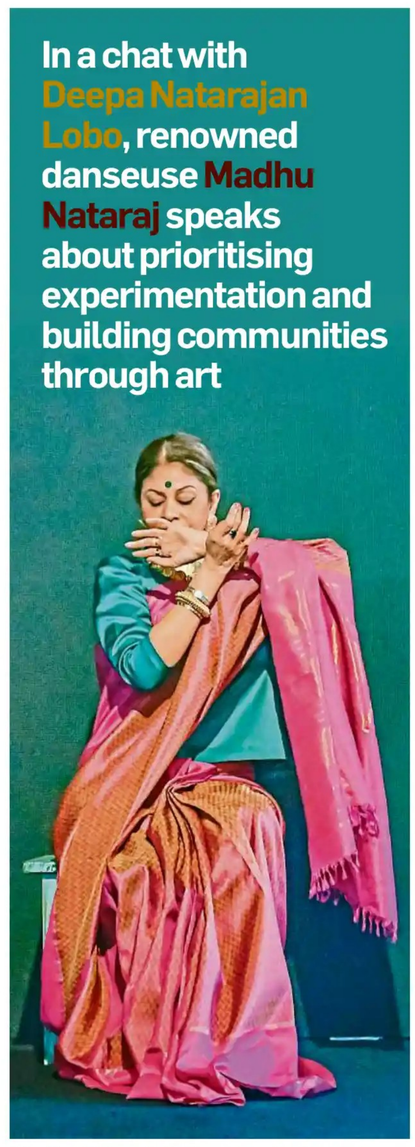
'The stage is a powerful space for advocacy'

In a chat with Deepa Natarajan Lobo, renowned danseuse Madhu Nataraj speaks about prioritising experimentation and building communities through art

Kathak exponent, choreographer, and educator Madhu Nataraj, Director of the Natya Institute of Kathak & Choreography and Founder of STEM Dance Kampni, has spent decades gently pushing boundaries. She blends various styles of movement while exploring pressing issues, all while carrying the formidable legacy of her mother, the legendary danseuse Maya Rao. Yet Nataraj wears this heritage lightly, prioritising mentorship, experimentation, and building communities through art.

This spirit shone through in her recent organisation of the successful Dr Maya Rao Kathak & Choreography Conference 2026. Co-curated by Dr Anita Ratnam, Shoba Narayan, and Nataraj herself, with an accompanying exhibition curated by Sandhya Raman and Shreedevi Deshpande Puri, the two-day event wove together conversations, performances, and a sensorial exhibition. It reflected on choreography as a living continuum, honouring Rao's enduring influence.

In a post-event interview, Nataraj spoke to *DHoS* about taking dance beyond the stage, the rising role of AI in choreography, and why today's youngsters fill her with hope. *Excerpts*



Madhu Nataraj during a performance.

What made this edition of the conference special?

This is an iconic year for us as it marks over six decades of the Natya Institute's journey. We wanted to mark the moment with an exhibition — a tangible way to honour Maya Rao's legacy and teachings. The curation was deeply multidisciplinary. For the first time, we presented an installation-based exhibition for dance, something usually reserved for the visual arts. It explored legacy, archives and choreography, and how dance has responded to socio-political change over time.

How important is it for the performing arts today to engage with the world outside?

Very important. We have always believed that dance mustn't exist in a silo or merely as a showpiece; it must engage with sustainability, conflict, archives, costume design, climate action and even hope in a polarised world.

Back in 1964, when my mother started the institute, she insisted that choreography students address contemporary issues. Over the decades, students have explored the issues of Zamindari systems, reservation policies, dowry, marital rape, gender equity, and, more recently, climate change and AI. We believe that the stage is a powerful space for advocacy, not just aesthetics, and we must use that to create dialogue around harmony, especially in today's polarised world.

How do you see AI influencing choreography, artists' rights and dance education?

Two years ago, I was asked to mentor a cohort of young designers, dancers and digital artists on how to create works using both dance and technology. I also created the headline act, 'Palimpsest', for Future Fantastic, which was India's first AI and tech art festival. That meant diving deep into how AI and machine learning actually work. So, I truly believe that as a platform for dialogue and in pedagogy, AI can be extremely powerful and open up different avenues for thought. But I'm bothered by artists using it to generate entire dance scripts. What happens to original thought, research, praxis, and long-term engagement then?

Is there a particular lesson from your mother that continues to guide you today, the way you teach and create?

She taught me to be non-judgmental, to keep my mind open to both tradition and modernity. "Don't wear blinkers," she'd say, urging me to observe deeply, believing inspiration propels true creativity. The day I decided to become a dancer, she asked me if I was ready to choose creative satisfaction over money. And that's a big thought that has always stayed with me. I still turn down shows that compromise artistic integrity, even if it means losing big opportunities. I have no complaints; I chose this path with my eyes wide open.

How do you balance tradition and experimentation?

Kathak runs in my DNA; I have always deeply loved the form but have been troubled by its hierarchies and rigidity. This dual identity of mine as a Kathak and contemporary dancer is very much a resonance of how we all, as Indians, balance tradition and modernity in our daily lives.

What advice would you like to give the young artists of today?

I admire Gen Z — the twenties crowd and even younger kids. They make mistakes, move on, live in the present and are fearless, unlike our "post-mortem generation" that overanalyses mistakes. Every philosophy in the world tells us to stay in the present — they already do that instinctively.

PAWS & LIFE

Can we be taught how to understand dogs?

Dogs communicate constantly, and a basic lesson on canine body language would lay so many of our fears to rest and prevent misconceptions, writes Nalini Sorensen

A few days ago, my 18-year-old son fell during basketball training in school and sprained his left ankle. He returned home on crutches. In all this emotional chaos, the person who caught my attention through the maze of feelings was the school physiotherapist. I have never met him; he joined the school only recently. There is no personal relationship whatsoever. He iced my son's ankle, taped it up for compression, and only then called me to gently break the news, showing kindness and genuine care.

It made me pause. There is something to be said about professionals with empathy — no matter which field they are in. I started to wonder if empathy can be taught or if one must simply be born with it. I distinctly remember thinking: Why aren't we taught empathy as a course in school?

Into the rabbit hole I went. I started to make a list of all the courses I wish I had been taught in school. I posted this question on social media and added points to my wish list, based on comments from others on that post. Financial literacy and basic life skills seemed very popular with most people.

In the end, my list had about 15 bullet points to it, and one of them was this: I wish we had been taught how to understand dogs in school. I suspect this made its way onto my list because there has been so much written about our community dogs in recent times, and there's so much fear, misinformation and misunderstanding about them.

The thing is, dog language is a language. And sadly, we're illiterate. A dog barking at the gate is often labelled aggressive. A dog growling when a child hugs it is considered dangerous. A dog that chews furniture is deemed naughty ... and just like that, we decide the problem is the dog.

What if the problem is that we don't understand them? There is a crucial difference between territorial behaviour and aggression. Dogs don't speak, but they communicate constantly. Growling is, in fact, communication; a growl is a warning. Yet it's almost always interpreted as bad behaviour. Dogs always warn us before they snap — we simply fail to recognise the signs. A stiff body at the gate, hackles raised, and barking are expressions of territorial behaviour, not mindless aggression.

Now, that is certainly guilt!

Lip licking, yawning, turning away, or showing the whites of the eyes are all signs of discomfort from a dog — signals that are routinely ignored. A basic lesson on canine body language would lay so many of our fears to rest. If we were taught what to look for and how to read a dog's body language and interpret its comfort level, we'd be able to see these signs and adjust our own behaviour accordingly.

Another thing that we'd learn, if such a course existed, is to let the dog approach us instead of forcing contact with them. Not every dog wants to be touched; not every dog wants to play. A dog that walks away is saying no — and that no deserves to be respected.

Most importantly, we'd learn to teach our children not to hug, grab or climb onto dogs. Screaming, running, and staring into a dog's eyes provokes the dog. Many children — and adults — are surprised to learn that prolonged eye contact can feel threatening to dogs, or that hugging, a human expression of affection, can be deeply stressful for them. Teaching our children what not to do around dogs is as important as teaching them what to do. It is, quite simply, about safety.

Is that guilt or is that a reprimand?

Training our children to wait, observe, and allow the dog to approach them helps build boundaries — both in the dog and in the human. It reinforces mutuality and respect, rather than force. Learning how another species experiences the world is an exercise in perspective-building. Shouldn't we all try to actively cultivate a life skill like this?

Above all else, if our children were taught how to understand dogs, we wouldn't just raise better pet parents, we'd raise more empathetic humans. We'd raise people who are gentler and kinder, not just to our dogs, but to each other as well. Something this country and our world sorely needs today.

The writer is an award-winning children's author who loves dogs, children, and books — the order changes daily. Write to her at nalinisorensen@gmail.com

Paws & Life *is a monthly column that reflects on how our pets shape the way we live, love, and learn.*

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